The Social Economy and the Future of Health and Welfare in Quebec and Canada

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Translated from the French by Stuart Anthony Stilitz

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\(^a\) “Social economy, health and welfare”.
\(^b\) “Thirty years in the evolution of social work practices in Quebec (1960-1990)”.
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INTRODUCTION

The social economy is playing an increasingly important role in the day-to-day political, economic and social life of Quebec, the United States and Europe⁴. In recent years, it has provided the focus for numerous debates in the social sciences community and among supporters of the social economy. The rediscovery of the social economy, following almost a century during which it was in and out of the public eye, may be understood in two ways. On one hand, it represents a response to the crisis of Keynesian interventionism in the economy (the employment crisis) and to the hierarchical forms of work organization and management with which Keynesianism is associated (the work crisis); on the other hand, it represents a response by civil society to the crisis in the welfare state, the most visible consequences of which are the crisis in public finances and the organizational and institutional limits to services provided by the State. In this context, social economy practices have revealed opportunities for change: by mobilizing associations, new forms of governance and civil society, they have promoted new ways of thinking about the relationship between the State and market forces. But further research in this area is vital if we wish to fully understand the emergence of these practices and support them as they grow; research will allow us to define the strengths and weaknesses of the social economy in a more precise and critical fashion.

Enterprises of the new social economy are attempting to redesign the institutional and structural dimensions of social and economic development; they are looking for alternative approaches that will help democratize the economy and public services. In Quebec, as elsewhere, they have made numerous attempts to gain institutional recognition for this so-called "third sector" of the economy; they have also generated discussions on possible forms of partnership between the social economy and the State, and on local development, labour market integration and changes to the model of social development (Vaillancourt et al., 2001; Lévesque and Ninacs, 2000).
Over the last three years, our three research teams, the Laboratoire de recherche sur les pratiques et les politiques sociales (LAREPPS), l’équipe Économie sociale, santé et bien-être (ESSBE) and the Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales dans les syndicats, les entreprises et l’économie sociale (CRISES) — all three of which are located at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) — have shown a keen interest in the social economy. Our work on the social economy actually began well before the concept became fashionable. By the 1980s, our research already included the social economy; we took a special interest in proximity services, integration services, social housing, and economic, social and community-based development.

In view of the fundamental issues emerging in the health and social services sectors in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, we felt that there was a need to make a contribution that would be of particular interest to the English-speaking public. This seemed all the more important since certain researchers in English Canada (in particular, Paul Leduc Browne, Jack Quarter, Jane Jensen and Keith G. Banting) were beginning to show an intense interest in the question of the social economy and in its impact on the crisis in the welfare state. The publication of the present document is intended to familiarize our English-speaking colleagues with our work, and build on the links already established with them. We hope that it will reveal the similarities with and differences between the social economy in Quebec and its counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

2 Yves Vaillancourt is Director of LAREPPS, Director of the ESSBE research team, a member of CRISES and co-ordinator of the CURA (Community-University Research Alliances) focus group on proximity services in the social economy. Benoît Lévesque is Director of CRISES, a member of ESSBE and co-representative of the CURA group on the social economy. Christian Jetté is a lecturer at the School of Social Work at UQAM, a member of the CURA focus group on proximity services in the social economy, and a researcher for LAREPPS and ESSBE research teams.
3 Our research teams recently published two documents in English on the question of social housing (for the Caledon Institute of Social Policy). In the bibliography at the end of the present document, readers will find complete references for these two publications (Thériault et al., 2001; Vaillancourt and Ducharme, 2001).
1. THE SCOPE OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

Although the concept of social economy is not new - it was employed in Quebec and elsewhere well before the 1990s - it nevertheless remains that its widespread use and modern image are more recent. The broad, inclusive definition of social economy that we usually employ in our research encompasses the majority of community organizations working in the field of health of welfare in Quebec⁴. Thus, while most of these organizations have existed for less than thirty years - though some longer (Bélanger et Lévesque, 1992) - until quite recently they had never been identified with what is known as the "new social economy".

By employing the concept of "new social economy" in this document, our intention is to give priority to sectors of the social economy that have appeared over the last 35 years. This designation therefore precludes older sectors of the social economy, such as development funds and farm and forest co-operatives.

As researchers, we have had to take a position on which types of organizations, objectively speaking, belong to the social economy. For example, there are groups that refuse to identify with the social economy, even though, in our view, they belong to this sector. Also, there is currently intense debate in Quebec over the issue of recognition, both among social movements themselves, and between the State and participants in the social economy (Boivin and Fortier, 1998; REESADQ, 1998; Lamarche, 1998; Vaillancourt and Jetté, 1997). The debates have not led to any clear social consensus on institutional recognition of particular groups or to a commonly accepted definition of the social economy; questions concerning alliances and the relationships among the various sectors of the social economy proved to be decisive in this regard. The debates nevertheless proved very

⁴ For about twenty years, authors in Quebec have used the expression "community organizations" when referring to the approximately 7,000 non-profit organizations (NPOs) active in the field of proximity services. NPOs provide advocacy services and alternative services, and are active in the field of prevention. Community organizations depend on the government for a major part of their financing, though they see themselves as independent of the State; they are associations that play a leading role in health and social services, especially in homecare. In the text
useful, since they provided information on the orientations of each social force vis-à-vis the social economy; they also demonstrated that stakeholders were very interested in demarcating the identity on which their institutional recognition might be based.

To determine objective criteria for membership in the social economy meant establishing well defined criteria that went beyond subjective factors. Determining membership (which groups belonged to the social economy sector) in this way also provided a methodology for delimiting our field of study at a level that was operational for our research.

We therefore chose a definition of the social economy that was as inclusive as possible. To this end, we relied on several Quebec documents, especially publications of the Chantier de l’économie sociale (Groupe de travail sur l’économie sociale, 1996), that have influenced the debate on this issue. In addition, certain features of our definition drew on the research of European specialists, including Jacques Defourny (Defourny and Manzon Campos, 1992) and Claude Vienney (1994). The following summarizes the principal themes identified by these two specialists:

- The social economy is made up of economic entities whose distinctiveness resides in the fact that they connect groups or associations (of individuals, rather than of shareholders) to enterprises or organizations producing goods and/or services, so as to satisfy the needs of the association's members. This means that many (but not all) community organizations, co-operatives and NPOs (not-for-profit organizations) are in fact essential components of the social economy.

- Enterprises and organizations belonging to the social economy establish their own organizational structures and consider themselves autonomous, that is, distinguishable from public or market sector institutions.

that follows, community organizations, together with co-operatives, are considered to belong to the third sector, or to what is often termed, "the new social economy".
• Enterprises and organizations of the social economy are official, formal organizations. This allows them to establish specific rules that mirror the social economy's trade-off or compromise between the objectives of economic viability (the commercial requirement) and the objectives of social utility (reflecting members’ needs). The way that the rules are defined depends on their legal status (co-operative, NPO or company) or on other codified agreements that apply to them. In most cases, the rules include definitions or descriptions of the organization's activities, procedures to be followed for appointing officers democratically, the manner in which the organization distributes surpluses and profits, and proper re-allocation procedures for enterprises that dismantle their operations (in order to avoid any attempt by a few individuals to misappropriate the financial aid provided by the State or the services provided by volunteers). Consequently, the rules governing enterprises and organizations of the social economy do not extend to informal institutions, such as families and natural helpers.

• While our definition of the social economy excludes informal volunteer work and undeclared work, it nevertheless views formally organized volunteers as an integral part of the social economy because they have a recognized legal status (most often, NPO status). Some enterprises and organizations of the social economy rely, at least in part, on volunteers or activists to deliver services and organize activities. This means that their activities rely on the concepts of gift and reciprocity.

• The profit motive does not constitute the primary focus of enterprises and organizations of the social economy. This sets them apart from the market sector. It is possible for organizations of the social economy to realize profits or surpluses; however, it is essential that any decisions involving redistribution of these surpluses be made collectively, and that they take social as well as economic objectives into account.
Enterprises and organizations of the social economy tend to be involved in the production of goods and services, though they are also active in advocacy.

Now that we have established the main parameters of our definition, we can differentiate between the social economy sector and the other three economic sectors. A number of European authors associate the social economy with the so-called "third sector" of the economy. This designation for the social economy distinguishes it from (1) enterprises of the "first" sector, that is, the market economy (or market); (2) organizations of the "second" sector, that is, the public economy (the State and extensions of the State, such as public and parapublic institutions), and (3) the informal sector, that is, the informal economy (natural helpers, etc.). This framework considers the social economy to be the third of four sectors that make up the economy; it provides the theoretical basis for the work of many European researchers (Enjolras, 1995; Kendall and Knapp, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Smith, Rochester and Hedley, 1995; Perri 6 and Vidal, 1994; Wistow et al., 1994; Defourny and Monzon Campos, 1992).

The "third sector" designation therefore facilitates an examination of the role played by the social economy: It highlights the fact that there are at least two other services working alongside the social economy in the delivery of health and welfare services. (In fact, the crisis in the welfare state actually manifests itself as a restructuring of services among four sectors).

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1 Of course, the authors, most of whom are European, who make use the "third sector" concept do not always refer explicitly to a third sector of the social economy. Use of the expression "third sector of the social economy" is relatively widespread in countries such as France and Belgium, but much less so in other European countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, one group of authors makes reference to a "community" or "voluntary" third sector, even though they exclude co-operatives from this sector (Kendall et Knapp, 1995); a second group makes an argument for including co-operatives in the third sector (Spear, Leonetti et Thomas, 1994; Defourny et Monzon Campos, 1992). We support the decision of the second group.
2. THE MERITS OF USING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY CONCEPT

Prompted by ongoing debates in Quebec and elsewhere regarding the social economy, we have evaluated the validity of employing the social economy concept. We have taken into account the current political, economic and social situation, in which the various modes of social regulation are marked by a strong propensity toward "economism" and reliance on court action. So why in the second half of the 1990s was there a need to categorize as "the social economy" groups and organizations that had previously been identified as "community-based organizations" or "mass organizations"? Was it justified from an epistemological standpoint? What are the social and political implications, for stakeholders and researchers, when the focus of study is transformed in this way? These questions require close study and could easily form the basis of a separate research project. Given our limited objectives in publishing the present text we will content ourselves with a few general observations.

While use of the term "social economy" goes back to the XIX century, its contemporary revival can not be dissociated from the crisis in socialism as actually practised (actual socialism), or from the crisis in the welfare state. While we recognize that there were periods when it could just as easily have referred to a social doctrine of the political right (as conveyed by the Catholic Church) as to a project of the political left (utopian socialism), the fact remains that at present, "[...] the social economy is reappearing on the agenda as an approach beckoning us to re-assess the relationship between the economic sphere and the social sphere, this time on a broad societal level, rather than at the level of the individual organization or enterprises" (Lévesque and Mendell, 1999 : 4).

Paradoxically, the neoliberal attempt to artificially remove all social issues from economic activities actually helped put the question of reembedding economic and social dimensions back on the agenda. Shareholders initially succeeded in suppressing any attempt by community-based forces to help manage individual enterprises or the economy as a whole; however, this ultimately led to an extreme form of economic instrumentalism, which, when put to the test, proved incapable of explaining why in periods of economic growth nations experienced stunning increases in the numbers of unemployed workers and welfare recipients. The sycophants of neoliberal policy developed a theory of economic activity that
deliberately refused to take into consideration any social dimensions of the economy, other than to
denounce these dimensions’ shortcomings (the inability of manpower to adapt to the labour market, the
economic burdens created by welfare assistance and public debt, etc.) or to convert certain of its features
into purely economic instruments.6

It was, perhaps, the attempt by economists to subject political, cultural and anthroponomical
regulation solely to the imperatives of market regulation that led certain intellectuals – in an attempt to
counterbalance the dominant neo-classical approach – to put the social economy back on the agenda. The
revival of social economy may thus be viewed as a broadening of the study of economics. Polanyi (1944)
was very familiar with the broader approach, and it is highly relevant to the fields of sociology, social
work, political science and business administration.

Seen as a stage in the advancement of science, the social economy is an attempt to interpret new
phenomena and give them greater visibility "[...] without, however, remaining blind to the social conflicts
associated with managing change" (Touraine, 1999 : 152). The social economy is the result of initiatives
organized by social movements (especially the women's movement and community-based movements)
attempting to devise concrete and innovative solutions to problems of health and welfare. "[A]n economy
characterized as 'social' would be one that acknowledges the social dimensions of the economy, at both
the enterprise level and the societal level" (Lévesque and Mendell, 1999: 4).

New theories on the social economy or third sector attempt to explain community-based
initiatives that do not fit the market sector or public sector categories. In recent years, these two sectors

6 We are thinking here in particular of the concepts of social cohesion, social capital, (developed by Putnam 1993;
1996) and "citizenship income". These ideas have been examined, but from diametrically opposed positions, both by
social democratic thinkers on the left and by neoliberal thinkers on the right. This convergence of intellectual
interests with regard to certain themes linked to social issues is somewhat ambiguous; it prompts some observers to
contend that the old categories of right and left are no longer appropriate in accounting for certain initiatives
undertaken by social forces from different backgrounds. Our own position is to nuance this contention: Some
common solutions to the crisis in welfarism may indeed be held by very different types of social forces when it
comes to the type of regulation preferred for economic development (such as market, State or solidarity-based
regulation); but their respective positions may vary considerably when it comes to the operational forms and
objectives they pursue in the application of these solutions. We can not gain a proper understanding of these
phenomena if we rely only on brief descriptions or mere enumeration of actions. On the contrary, we must carefully
interpret the positions taken by these forces, and situate them in the social, political, cultural and economic contexts
in which they arose. For more on this topic, see also the article by Jane Lewis (1999).
have revealed their limited ability " [...] to secure employment, occupations, dignity and self-esteem for all" (Caillé and Laville, 1998 : 5). A number of groups that since the 1960s have been associated with Quebec's grassroots and community-based movements (Bélanger and Lévesque, 1992), are now concerned about the use of the term "social economy"; even principal stakeholders can not agree if the term should be employed. The issue is as follows: why employ a name that attracts controversy and describes a phenomenon that is in flux and difficult to define? Stated differently, "Why, with the onset of the 1970s, were various organizations who had previously identified themselves as separate from one another now compelled to grant each other mutual recognition and seek recognition as part of the same institutional framework?" (Vienney, 2000 : 40).

Several explanations have been offered, such as responding to economism and systematizing and clarifying social action. In addition, the concept opens up a new heuristic space for social scientists who see it as a tool to deconstruct social perspectives, which they can later reconstruct on the basis of theoretical approaches reflecting a variety of worldviews. In our view, the social economy does not and can not claim to be a new research discipline, notwithstanding attempts to do so by certain economists and trends in XIX century Social Christianity (Vienney, 2000). Rather, it is a social construction that varies with the approach adopted by each researcher. For example, our own theoretical approach, which combines different approaches (the social movement approach, the regulation approach, the institutional approach, organizational theory, etc.), shapes the social economy in a particular way and gives it a unique place within the framework of the crisis in Fordism. In our approach, it is the designation and institutional representation of the social economy, rather than the phenomenon itself, that are new.

That said, while the social economy has existed more or less without interruption and under a variety of names since at least the XIX century, it has undergone significant transformation over the last ten years. During the 1990s, Quebec's community organizations made major strides, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the services they provided; organizations devoted to advocacy and improving the quality of life for marginalized sectors of the population gained a higher profile during the employment crisis and the budgetary crisis of the State. As a result of these crises, several levels of government
withdrew from services designed to respond to the needs of the population and increasingly supported community groups. However, we must caution that it would be reductionist to see in the State's newfound enthusiasm for community groups — evident in Quebec as of the second half of the 1980s — an unequivocal sign that neoliberals were exploiting these groups opportunistically.

In reality, the growing importance to the State of the social economy, together with the emergence of the new designation, i.e., "the social economy", (but which does not necessarily imply a new social reality), testify to a new stage in the evolution of community organizations. This new stage is characterized by the rise of new generations of organizations in step with the introduction of more or less institutionalized compromises. Using a typology developed by Bélanger et Lévesque (1992), we can identify for the period 1960-1992 the three generations of grassroots or community organizations that were present in Quebec: the citizen participation groups and advocacy groups created during the 1960s; the service organizations that arose during the 1970s; and the community groups launched in the early 1980s.

Each generation of organizations arose in response to new needs or to the inadequacies of the welfare state. (In spite of these new circumstances, the organizations managed to maintain a degree of continuity in their objectives and policy principles: democracy, roles for user-consumers, rejection of bureaucracy, etc.). Change implied discontinuity or rupture as each new generation of organizations took control; with the arrival of each crisis-related transformation affecting wage-earners and the welfare state, certain organizations made sure that they were in the foreground of events. However, the emergence of new groups did not result in the disappearance of the older groups; it simply meant that some of the groups were now more open to social relationships that involved institutional compromises. As a result, the social economy was comprised of both the most recent generation of social movements and an ongoing political movement claiming to be distinct from both the public and private sectors.

The renewed interest in the social economy displayed over the last few years by intellectuals and academic researchers also reflects an increase in the number of associations taking part in economic activity. For a long time, intellectuals overlooked the scope of this activity. There are two possible
explanations for this: (1) These associations did not always account for a significant proportion of overall economic activity (compared to that of the market and public sectors); (2) Economic activity was difficult to evaluate, since census and national accounting systems were often ill-suited to the task. "Eluding statistical analysis, they thus became negligible entities; for where there is no data, there can be no policy", as Alain Caillé and Jean-Louis Laville quite aptly commented in the preface to an issue of M.A.U.S.S. dealing with the socio-economic aspects of associations (Caillé and Laville, 1998: 9). In recent years, efforts have been made to more accurately measure certain aspects of this activity, especially the funding and job-creation activities of Quebec's associations (CSMO, 2001; Saucier and Thivierge, 1999; Boivin and Youde, 1998; Proulx, 1998; Tremblay and Tremblay, 1998; Tessier and Roussel, 1998; Mathieu et al., 1996) Still, much remains to be done if we wish to be in a position to assess not only their overall social and economic impact, but also their specific impact in the area of prevention (with regard to the health and welfare of individuals and communities).

These trends reveal that the social economy is increasingly relevant, both to the social forces directly involved and to the intellectuals interested in its evolution. Of course, we have not exhausted all epistemological considerations related to the concept. Nonetheless, we hope that our discussion has shed sufficient light on the subject matter to justify employing the concept of social economy; given ongoing changes in the welfare state, we believe that the term is particularly appropriate.
3. CRISIS AND CHANGE IN THE WELFARE STATE

Three distinct historical periods are covered in the present analysis: the period in which the welfare state, characterized as "Fordist", was created (1945-1980); the period of crisis in the welfare state (1981-1990); and the period in which the Fordist development model was transformed; this transformation affected many areas of life, including work, the welfare state and public services. (1991-1999).

In a number of our previous studies, we examined two phenomena typical of Fordism: Taylorist work organization and the system for providing services that often had a welfarist orientation. We noted the interplay of two distinct types of social relationships: work relationships and consumer relationships. We also identified the double deficit in participation that arose in the Fordist development model (one deficit affecting producers of services and another affecting consumers of services). The counterbalance to this deficit was the reaction to the crisis in Fordism and to the transformation of the welfare state; it placed the accent on a two-pronged strategy for "empowerment" that involved new alliances between producers and consumers of services (Bélanger and Lévesque, 1991; 1992; Bélanger, Boucher and Lévesque, 1994; Vaillancourt, 1995; 1996).

To an extent, the crisis in the welfare state comes down to a crisis in welfarism (the nexus of welfarist relationships). The crisis in the welfare state is deepening not only because of financial considerations (the fiscal crisis of the State), but also due to a widespread questioning by workers of Taylorist work organization. The crisis also extends to the social services system, which needs to be re-organized; social service users (represented by community-based movements and even by proponents of decentralization at the regional and community levels), as well as workers, are demanding a role in this re-organization. Serious questions are being raised concerning the ability of centralized, bureaucratic regulation to handle the problems confronting public and private organisations; centralized decision-making by experts creates barriers to innovation in every field,
including the organization of work, collective agreements and quality-driven adaptation to new forms of competition.

The link between the social economy and the crisis in the welfare state becomes clearer if we remember that the current transformation of the health and social services network comes under the search for a new model of development; a new model may very well mean the end of certain features of the old Fordist social contract that emerged from the post World War II boom period (Rosanvallon, 1995; Favreau and Lévesque, 1995; Perret and Roustang, 1993). We now live in an era of post-Fordist and post-welfarist structures; if conditions were right, the social economy could now provide a way to transcend the dual deficit in participation noted above, though it would not constitute a panacea.

To understand the social economy's potential within the framework of changes currently underway, especially in the area of health and welfare, it is necessary to re-examine the legacy of the Castonguay reforms\(^\text{7}\) of the 1970s, and of developments since then. The Castonguay reforms meant relying on intensive and centralized intervention by the State, not only with regard to the financing and regulation of services, but also with regard to their distribution; there was more interventionism of this type in Quebec than in any other Canadian province. During the 1970s, it led to a moratorium on private sector involvement and a lack of confidence in the resources of the social economy and the informal economy, both of which were practically forgotten (which is not at all to say that they had disappeared). The Castonguay reform substantiated a widely held worldview, to the effect that relying almost exclusively on the State to provide services was intrinsic to the idea of social progress. In this worldview, any reduction by the State in the distribution of services, and even any non-State response to new demands, was perceived as a step backwards and frequently associated with privatization. Thus, certain social forces instinctively held on to public ownership as a way to avoid privatization (Vaillancourt and Jetté, 1997; Bélanger, 1992).

With the beginning of the 1980s and the crisis in the Fordist-welfarist model of development, the State rediscovered the resources of the social economy sector. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS, the Government of Quebec department in charge of health and social services) began supporting community organizations that worked with youth, women, the elderly, the handicapped and those with mental health problems. At the same time, it rediscovered the potential of CLSCs and the importance of formulating policies on home support and de-institutionalization, both of which affected the elderly and the handicapped. Notwithstanding these changes, from 1981 to

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\(^{\text{7}}\) Referring to Claude Castonguay, President of the Castonguay Commission, who would serve from 1970 to 1973 as Ministre des Affaires sociales (Minister of Social Affairs) in the Liberal government of Premier Robert Bourassa.
2000 the Government of Quebec did not take decisive action and failed to come up with a coherent shift in policy.

More recent changes initiated by the MSSS, particularly the Côté\textsuperscript{8} reforms of 1991 and the Rochon\textsuperscript{9} reforms of 1996, resulted in greater acceptance for organizations of the social economy working in the area of health and welfare. However, these reforms were incomplete. On one hand, the Côté\textsuperscript{10} reforms led to increased recognition of the role of users and community organizations, (until then they had been given only a marginal role in planning services); it also resulted in greater sympathy for their demands. However, the impact of these reforms remained fairly limited due to the inertia of the system. On the other hand, the Rochon\textsuperscript{11} reforms introduced changes promoting the de-institutionalization and transfer of some services to community-based organizations. Still, the transfer of resources that were supposed to accompany these changes did not meet the organizations’ needs or even the stated objectives of the reforms. Instead, the Rochon reforms seem to have fallen victim to political priorities, including that of a zero deficit, originating beyond the confines of the MSSS; as long as such priorities prevailed, there was little hope that the reforms could revitalize ministerial practices or policies.

The table on the next page summarizes our analysis of the transformation of Quebec’s welfare state in the area of health and welfare. For each historical period, the main emphasis is on the roles played by the State and the social economy in delivery of services. To put the changes that occurred during the 1970s (that is, following the Castonguay-Nepveu reforms) in context, we have added a section on the 1960s period\textsuperscript{12}.

\textsuperscript{8} Referring to Marc-Yvan Côté, Ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux (Minister of Health and Social Services) from 1988 to 1993 in the Liberal government of Premier Robert Bourassa.
\textsuperscript{9} Referring to Jean Rochon, Ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux (Minister of Health and Social Services) from 1994 to 1998 in the Parti Québécois government of Premier Lucien Bouchard.
\textsuperscript{10} Referring to Marc-Yvan Côté, Ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux (Minister of Health and Social Services) from 1988 to 1993 in the Liberal government of Premier Robert Bourassa.
\textsuperscript{11} Referring to Jean Rochon, Ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux (Minister of Health and Social Services) from 1994 to 1998 in the Parti Québécois government of Premier Lucien Bouchard.
\textsuperscript{12} This table, and much of the accompanying analysis, is the result of research carried out within the framework of a
TABLE III: Types of institutional change in Quebec’s health and social service system, by historical period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical period</th>
<th>Types of institutional change in Quebec’s health and social service system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-1972</td>
<td>Period of transition in Quebec's health and social service system, from the liberal form of regulation to the welfarist form. The private sector and charitable organizations (mainly religious) are still very active in the delivery of services, though their funding comes increasingly from the public sector. Democracy and solidarity (as integral features of the social economy) are still in their infancy (social development, citizen committees, community centres, free clinics, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1981</td>
<td>Period of intense State control in the health and social services sector (Castonguay-Nepveu reforms). From now on, the principal components of the system (hospitals, agencies, orphanages, etc.) fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, which had already been providing most of the funding during the previous decade. This is the golden age of welfarism and of unionism in the public sector. During this period, community organizations (organizations today associated with the new social economy) are virtually forgotten, though still present. Also during this period, we see the first signs of the crisis in Fordism and welfarism; this leads to antagonism between supporters of the shift toward State control and those who wish to see this process halted, or at least slowed down; each side hardens its position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-1991</td>
<td>Period of crisis in the welfarist model. There is a groping around to find approaches based on an agenda that is either (a) neoliberal (privatization, de-insurance, etc.) and paternalistic (food banks, ad hoc assistance from religious organizations, etc.), or (b) Statist or welfarist (defence of status quo, desire to maintain or extend the public sector to all social and health services, etc.). During this period, community organizations interfacing with the health and welfare field gradually resurface; however, they are still considered to be marginal forces by supporters of the two other major approaches [(a) and (b)], especially by public sector unions in the health and social services field who have adopted a defensive strategy because of changes that are affecting them directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1999</td>
<td>In this period, the welfare state and the welfarist model are redefined; people rediscover the potential of civil society, (that is, of its social groups and community organizations, especially those involved in the field of health and services that come under the terms of the Côté reforms). These organizations gradually form a bona fide sector within what is henceforth termed the “new social economy”. Nevertheless, the winds of neoliberalism continue to blow throughout Quebec; certain supporters of the neoliberal vision seek to siphon off the benefits accruing to enterprises of the social economy involved in the production and delivery of health and social services, while avoiding their responsibilities when it comes to providing the prerequisites for growth (adequate financing, more training for workers, improved working conditions, etc.). Labour unions in the field of health and social services pursue a defensive strategy aiming to maintain the status quo, notwithstanding a few timid conciliatory moves prompted by membership pressures or by the central labour bodies to which they belong.</td>
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project entitled "30 ans de développement des pratiques en travail social au Québec (1960-1990)” (“Thirty years of developing social work practices in Quebec, 1960-1990”). This research project, led by Yves Vaillancourt, was made possible due to subsidies from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and from the Fonds de développement académique du réseau de l’Université du Québec (FODAR).
5. THE SOCIAL ECONOMY AND HEALTH AND WELFARE IN CANADA (OUTSIDE OF QUEBEC)

To terminate, we would like to make a few remarks concerning the social economy in Canada (outside of Quebec). To this end, we will use the findings we obtained through a literature review on studies dealing with the social economy in Quebec, Canada, the United States and Europe13 (Jetté et al., 2000). The results of this review show that the literature on the social economy in Quebec is much larger than the literature dealing with the social economy in the other Canadian provinces. The low output of literature in provinces other than Quebec reflects their recent and somewhat limited use of the social economy and third sector concepts.

From the start, we decided to exclude from our corpus (a) any documents treating volunteer resources exclusively – or almost exclusively – from the perspective of management or motivation theory, and (b) documents treating the voluntary sector and the non-profit sector as concepts based on charity or philanthropy. That said, a preliminary review of the Canadian literature revealed that a number of documents dealing with the social economy gave prime importance to the role of voluntary organizations and philanthropy. We nevertheless retained some of the more relevant documents in this category; had we not done so, our corpus of Canadian literature on the social economy would have been extremely thin.

For the majority of English-Canadian authors examined, the third sector seemed first and foremost to be made up of volunteer resources financed by donations and private charity (Ross, 1990; Smith, 1992; Campbell, 1994; 1993; Sharpe, 1994; Picard, 1997; Scharf, Cherniavsy and Hogg 1997). Thus, the characteristics attributed to the third sector by certain Canadian experts did not sufficiently fit our own definition of the social economy. As a result, we could not include them in our analysis. In spite of these drawbacks, for provinces outside of Quebec, 1997 seems to have been a good year for growth in literature on that part of the social economy dealing with health and welfare (Jetté et al., 2000).

13 As explained in the beginning, a large part of the content presented in this research journal uses analysis originally developed for the publication of a book. The results presented here are also contained in this book (Jetté et al., 2000).
1997 saw the publication of a significant number of works on the social economy and the third sector in Canada. Prior to this date, little had been written on the subject; one notable exception was the 1992 publication by Jack Quarter on the social economy in Canada (Quarter, 1992). Judging from the results obtained by our study for the years 1998 and 1999, the interest demonstrated in the social economy by those involved in the field of health and welfare in Canada seems to have come to a halt after 1997. The results of our research do not allow us to draw any conclusions regarding the level of interest of Canadian academics (or non-academics) in the health and welfare component of the social economy.

However, in an article appearing in the spring 1999 issue of the French-language publication, *Nouvelles pratiques sociales*, Paul Leduc Browne analyses English Canada's third sector literature. He says: "While the third sector generates much interest in English Canada – among the country's federal and provincial departments, private research organizations (think tanks) and universities, for example – […] it is still not well known and has been inadequately analysed on a theoretical level" (Browne, 1999: 143). Thus, his study seems to confirm some of our observations to the effect that "historical and sociological perspectives often give way to abstract logical models, thereby following in the footsteps of American economic studies […]" (ibid. 1999: 147). Browne notes that research on the third sector in English Canada dealt, "in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, above all with questions of a technical nature bearing on the recruitment of volunteers, and with the funding and management of associations and enterprises […]" (ibid. 1999: 145); we might add that, based on our own research, this trend seems to have continued in the 1990s. In the article, Browne, like other Canadian researchers (Shields and Mitchell Evans, 1998), maintains a rather defensive position with respect to the potential of the social economy.

In English Canada, there is a relatively low level of interest in the social economy, even though this sector, alongside the private and public sectors, creates services and economic activities that are socially useful. One explanation for this may stem from the fact that the institutionalization of the social economy in English Canada is fairly weak compared to its counterpart in Quebec. The fact that English Canada's social movements and provincial governments are relatively indifferent toward it may be a contributing factor (Vaillancourt *et al.*, 2001). This is not to say that, empirically speaking, the social economy does not exist in English Canada; however, it is frequently treated as, or limited to, community economic development (CED). As a result, it sometimes proves difficult for
those in English Canada who are interested in CEDs (a movement that, by our definition, belongs to the social economy) to broaden their horizons to encompass the entire social economy sector.

On the other hand, an important work, *The Nonprofit Sector in Canada. Role and Relationships*, by Keith G. Banting, was published last year (Banting, 2000). It demonstrates that English Canada's restricted conception of the social economy is changing and that the perspective of certain English Canadian authors is now broader. Moreover, the papers presented in Banting's book will provide a starting point for addressing the theoretical and empirical shortcomings of research on the social economy in English Canada; P.L. Browne provides an up-to-date analysis of this research (Browne, 1999).

There is some terminological confusion in English Canada regarding the social economy and the third sector; they are occasionally confused with concepts such as "the voluntary sector", "the non-profit sector" and "the voluntary non-profit sector". (Campbell, 1994; 1993). While these three concepts are occasionally associated with the social economy, this association far from unambiguous. Clarification is important, for "behind issues of translation lurk systems, that is, constructed space and representation space, and various universes of action and speech" (Simonet, 1998 : 59). While "voluntary sector" and "non profit sector" (and their various associated designations) are very different from one another, especially in Quebec, they nevertheless have a common denominator: they rely heavily on and give priority to volunteers to organize activities and carry out tasks connected to the health and welfare of individuals. However, intensive use of volunteers may indicate submission by the social economy to neoliberalism, as is often the case in the United States (Jetté et al., 2000).

Neoliberal attitudes are also present in some Canadian provinces, particularly Ontario, where, to respond to the provincial government's massive budgetary cuts in health and social services, the community development model relies largely on private charity and volunteer work (Hall and Banting, 1999; Ralph, Welch, 1997; St-Amand and Régimbald, 1997; Mwarigha and Murphy, 1997; Kérissit and St-Amand, 1997; Browne, 1996). This kind of response stands in clear contrast to the situation in Quebec, where the development of the social economy places greater emphasis on complementarity with public services, even though the risks of job or market substitution are, admittedly, always present.

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14 For a broader comparison between the social economy in Quebec and its counterparts in the rest of Canada, especially in the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, we refer readers to an article published in English by one of our research teams (Vaillancourt et al., 2000).
The present survey of Canada's social economy literature does not pretend to be exhaustive. Nonetheless, we believe that it provides a sufficiently representative sampling to validate our underlying hypothesis, namely, that the social economy has shown itself to be a concept whose use is more limited in English Canada than in Quebec or Europe (Jetté et al., 2000). For researchers, the social economy has heuristic potential, while for social movement activists, unionists and service providers in the field of health and welfare it can accelerate social change. However, its potential is still largely untapped by the progressive social forces in English Canada seeking innovative solutions to the crises in Fordism and welfarism.
CONCLUSION

Overall, our research during the last few years has revealed two possible scenarios regarding the role and impact of the social economy in the context of restructured health and welfare services. The social economy may become "an economy of the poor", serving neoliberal strategy, or it may become a vehicle for social movements who wish to build a new development model based on greater community solidarity.

Some authors point to the dangers of allowing the social economy to become an instrument of neoliberals, who exploit this sector to reduce health and welfare costs. In Quebec, too, scenarios of this sort worry social movements (community organizations, women's groups and unions in the health and social services sector), since their efforts to plan for the future are compromised by the neoliberal agenda. These social movements sometimes view the social economy as reinforcing the institutionalization of job insecurity among enterprises that have "fallen on hard times". The social economy, they maintain, camouflages and legitimizes channels for privatizing public services, and promotes the emergence of second-rate services. A number of participants in public debates held recently in Quebec and throughout Canada expressed deep concern about this threat (Browne, 1999; Roy, 1997; Boivin, 1998; Fontan and Shragge, 1996). Some authors argue that if the social economy takes this path, it is women who will most likely suffer the most (AFÉAS, 1998; Lamoureux, 1998; Martel, 1996).

By contrast, other authors place the emphasis on a social economy in which solidarity-based social movements are the driving force (Laville, 1992). In scenarios based on this assumption, the social economy can become a vehicle for social transformation facilitating the creation of decent jobs and high-quality services, while preserving its highly developed expertise in mobilizing volunteers. Given the changes that the welfare state is currently undertaking in the field of health and welfare, the social economy could reinforce community-based social networks and promote greater democracy in the organization of
work and services. In other words, it could create new opportunities for public- and private-sector organizations interested in developing new management methods in the service sector; at the same time, this would address the participation deficit discussed above. A number of specialists in the field maintain that, in spite of the threat posed by neoliberalism, the second scenario is very promising.

Studies carried out by our own research teams demonstrated that the social economy lends itself to a variety of theoretical approaches. In Europe, approaches to the social economy are much more diverse than in North America, where, probably due to the prevailing cultural and political homogeneity, a single approach dominates. On one hand, those on the political right who defend the social economy see it as a return to the forms of mutual aid that existed before the rise of the welfare state; in the liberal approach, a revival of community spirit among citizens should allow certain sectors of the population to free themselves of dependence on public services, which are often considered costly and ineffective. On the other hand, its detractors on the traditional left see the social economy as nothing more than a complement to economic liberalism, which uses it to reduce economic and administrative constraints associated with the social regulations of the State. In the latter perspective, any breakthrough achieved by the social economy is dangerous, since it is achieved at the expense of government services, which constitute the last bulwark against the increasing hegemony of markets in numerous spheres of public life.

In this debate, Quebec differentiates itself in several ways. In this province, many groups give the social economy sector a progressive role: they see it as a vehicle for social change. While they recognize that the social economy may be used to further the neoliberal agenda, they also recognize its potential in developing their own democratic and solidarity-based vision. Historically, Quebec’s social movements have played a significant part in the emergence of several sectors of the social economy; they have also endowed these sectors with a dynamism and level of organization that are virtually unrivalled in North America (Vaillancourt et al., 2000). The social economy in Quebec
has played a unique role alongside the private and public sectors; the scope of its activities and its
corribution to social and economic development now make it a player with whom other social
forces must reckon. At the same time, the tremendous potential that this sector holds for the future of
democracy gives rise to certain expectations, not all of which will necessarily be fulfilled, especially
those based on radically transforming institutions, or on totally eradicating the failings and inequities
of capitalism. In spite of these limitations, the dynamism found in many enterprises of the social
economy can significantly change institutional structures. This is especially true of enterprises that
already have fairly strong roots at the local or regional levels; however, these enterprises must first of
all keep their promise to entrench democracy and grassroots participation.

To be sure, one of the most difficult challenges is to vest power in the democratic, deliberative
structures created by enterprises of the social economy. Participatory structures are essential if we
wish to create a more active citizenry; but it is difficult to predict if real participation will in fact be
achieved. In a society where political debate seems to elicit derision as well as interest, and in which
general interest is often confused with individual interest, participation may be seen as indicative of
political naivete or obsolete idealism. Society's disinterest in government is just as much of a threat
as the possibility of enterprises coming under State supervision; it also benefits the private sector and
plays a key role in undermining the social economy.

If that is the case, and several Quebec and European studies seem to confirm that it is (Jetté et
al., 2000), then any hope of breathing new life into community organizations of the social economy
will depend in large measure on adopting strategies that can be adjusted according to social, political
and economic circumstances. In particular, we are referring to ways that organizations might
strengthen their roots in the community: combining their activities with local development strategies,
creating solid networking links within the social economy, developing a sense of responsibility
toward private sector and public sector organizations (and encouraging these organizations to
reciprocate), and continuing the innovative intersectoral action for which they are famous. However,
organizations of the social economy will only realize their potential if they and their supporters also establish effective relationships with the State (that is, true partnerships with the State, rather than relationships based on subcontracting).

The outcome of this process of institutionalization, which is established through complex social relationships, will largely depend on the solidarity that can be established among the different groups and sectors of the social economy while they struggle to gain full recognition for their activities. This struggle will ultimately determine the status and roles of the various health and welfare sectors of the social economy. In a society dominated by market activities, and in which the compromises flowing from the processes of institutionalization traditionally favour market forces, the strategies advanced will be of critical importance.

It may be hasty at this stage to draw definitive conclusions regarding the orientation of new models emerging in Quebec and elsewhere. Still, our research has noted a recent surge of interest by stakeholders and researchers in specific features of the social economy. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done if we wish to systematically demonstrate that the social economy is no less relevant or effective than the public and private sectors.

The social economy is therefore at the crossroads. By itself, it is not a panacea for the problems generated by the excesses of the market economy; nor can it provide miracle solutions to the perverse effects of the welfare state. Nevertheless, it holds tremendous promise for democracy and social change, as long as the social forces concerned with questions of equity, justice and social cohesion provide it with the leadership and political inspiration required to bring about solidarity-based development. However, if these social forces fail to realize their potential, opposing forces will fill the void and use the social economy as an instrument for deregulation. This much can be said with certainty: in the light of the growth it has experienced and the recognition it has gained in Quebec and elsewhere over the last twenty years, the social economy is here to stay. A basic question remains: who will give it direction, and what meaning will various social forces confer upon it.
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