

Is there a 'co-operative advantage' in news markets?



Co-operators have been late to penetrate news markets. Yet several successful exemplars of co-operative media innovation suggest the model is increasingly relevant to journalism's democratic reconstruction. This inquiry draws from case study literature on this marginal, late-

blooming, but expanding sector to assess the case for campaigns to develop news co-operatives.

Co-operators have long complained that corporate media-bias neglects co-operation, distorts public understanding of the model, and generally skews the news in elite interests. Moreover, despite the investor-owned news sector's entrenched growth through most of the 20th Century, corporate media increasingly fail to sustain quality, independent journalism into the 21st Century. This failure creates openings for the co-operative news-sector's expansion. Drawing from Spear's general theory of co-operative advantage, case study evidence illustrates that news co-ops have six inbuilt advantages over investor-owned media firms. The emerging news sector's varied governance types, development trajectories, and examples demonstrate news co-operation's evolving prospects.

Lack of awareness of the co-operative model has long been a leading concern of Canadian co-operative leaders. The cases profiled here illustrate how news co-operatives can raise that profile. Moreover, co-operative news innovations can protect quality journalism, expand viewpoint diversity, and thus help build more engaged, democratic communities.



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