

Adapting a Co-operative Marketing Framework as a Sustainable Development Model for Indigenous and Marginalized Communities: A Research Proposal

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Abstract: The researcher's doctoral work aimed to understand how the Co-operative Marketing Framework developed from existing agricultural credit co-operative models established elsewhere was being replicated among indigenous co-operatives in the State of Kerala, India. It explored Government policies for implementing the concept of linking credit with marketing and developing a Co-operative Marketing Framework to resolve the disadvantaged circumstances faced by Indigenous communities. The community-based research proposed in this paper will draw on the lessons of the doctoral research and other literature to develop an adapted new marketing framework to improve the well-being of indigenous and other marginalized / excluded communities without harming their lifestyles and values. The research will be informed by an ethnographic grounding to establish indigenous community needs as defined by the indigenous community itself. Further objectives will be to: support the protection of habitat, species, and alternative lifestyles in the face of a homogenization of culture, the destruction of the natural world and the increasing centralization and polarization of power; and, find a co-operative strategy which not only preserves existing alternative communities but explores the possibility for those seeking an alternative to the current consumer society and wage-based economy to find a way out. The paper is not just a proposal for the project the researcher wants to undertake but a proposal for a thousand community-based research projects supporting indigenous and marginalised / excluded communities and others who, faced with the existential threats of just carrying on, would like to exclude themselves from the growth led consumer economy.

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Keywords: co-operative marketing framework, sustainable development, indigenous and marginalized communities

1. Introduction

This research proposal seeks to build on the historical and contemporary evidence that Co-operative Models for both marketing and procurement can provide a framework for development that can be adapted to indigenous and other communities that find themselves otherwise in some sense 'excluded' from whatever it is that might be called the 'mainstream' as defined by the realization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Well-coordinated co-operatives have provided, in many diverse societies and historical contexts, a great step forward in the development of inclusivity within nation states with histories of widespread impoverishment of working people and small farmers as well as the oppression of minorities (Birchall, 1997). Their commercial success depends on a not-for-profit market efficiency, coverage, and operational strength to manage resources to procure customers and suppliers, enabling the incremental accumulation of capital (finance, land, buildings, and plant) to meet the requirements of their members and communities living in both rural and urban areas.

However, most of these historical examples have taken place in the context of philanthropic leadership in situations of shared cultural values and traditions (Shaffer, 1999). Introducing systems operational in one culture into that of another, as is the case of introducing co-operative business models into indigenous communities, without consideration of the cultural and historical contexts of the recipients are unlikely to be successful. Engagement must commence with careful trust building grounded in ethnographic studies led by the communities themselves to

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establish co-operative priorities. The specifics of each community need to be understood and engaged with. The approach of adapting community-based subsistence economies to market needs requires critical re-evaluation in the light of growing awareness of indigenous knowledge and management of habitat (UN Environmental Programme, 2020). Responding to the needs of indigenous and other excluded communities as well as equipping those established co-operatives, both large and small, for resilience in face of today's global and complex set of existential threats needs the co-operative movement's seventh principle of 'Concern for Community' (International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), n.d.) to be reassigned as its first. The research proposal starts with two questions concerning the application of co-operative strategies for realising the UN sustainable development objectives in indigenous and other excluded communities. First, should the project consider knowledge transfer as a two-way process? Second, should the so called 'donor' agencies not also have as a project objective the transfer of indigenous, and other excluded communities' knowledge as a possible reservoir of knowledge for managing change and resilience in the mainstream society / economy model?

The foundational guiding principle of this research project is that the key building block of a progressive modern social system relies on the existing conviction for justice (Dias, 1994). Resource scarcity and economic polarization against increasing incidents of severe weather, food shortages, inflation and the ravages of war and sectarian violence make the realisations of justice difficult. Peace without economic development can be hard to maintain (Paz, 2015, pp. 165-168). Co-operatives, as not-for-profit autonomous associations of individuals sharing principles and purposes based on delivering individual and community development, may be in a better position to reach out and adapt in response to the issues facing the indigenous and excluded communities from the perspective of the community. There is clear evidence in the context of European and North American historical experience that co-operatives, particularly in the areas of agriculture and financial services, can have a major impact on impoverished and excluded communities. The most prominent example of an oppressed ethnic minority that has raised itself up through a strong sense of cultural identity and solidarity using a co-operative business model adapted to their culture and needs amid war and oppressive regimes are the Basques in northern Spain (Bajo & Roelants, 2011, pp. 176-212).

The Importance of Indigenous Communities

There is a convincing body of research published in various academic journals that co-operatives are playing a significant role in reviving society from pandemics and providing platforms for opportunities for women, youth, migrants, and inclusivity in communities. There is, however, much less research and experience of co-operation among indigenous and other marginalised / excluded communities. When referring to indigenous communities the following definition is helpful.

Indigenous peoples have historical continuity or association with a given region or part of a given region prior to colonization or annexation; identify themselves as indigenous and be accepted as members by their community; have strong links to territories, surrounding natural resources and ecosystems; maintain at least in part, distinct social, economic and political systems; maintain, at least in part, distinct languages, cultures, beliefs and knowledge systems; are resolved to maintain and further develop their identity and distinct social, economic, cultural and political institutions as distinct peoples and communities; and often form non-dominant sectors of society. (UN Environmental Programme 2020)

Today, there is a growing realization of the important role indigenous communities have in the front line for defending habitat, particularly against rainforest destruction. It's becoming clear that the maintenance of indigenous ways of life are closely related to their significance as protectors of habitat, biodiversity, and important natural sources of carbon capture. Indigenous people have a special relationship with the land on which they have lived for generations, sometimes for tens of thousands of years. They possess crucial knowledge about how to manage natural resources sustainably and act as guardians or custodians of the land for the next generation (Sengupta, 2015).

At least a quarter of the world's land area is owned, managed, used, or occupied by indigenous peoples and local communities. While nature in these areas is degrading less quickly than in

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*others, the impact of climate and ecosystem change has a direct impact on local livelihoods.
(UN Environmental Programme, 2020)*

Climate change is already impacting seriously on the arctic-ranging indigenous peoples of the northern hemisphere, and climate change can expect to hit small ethnic communities of hunters and gatherers and pastoralists in Africa. On the other hand, the increasingly dense urban populations' dependency on extended supply chains and vulnerable technological eco systems along with air pollution, the fragmentation of societies, loneliness, deteriorating mental health, poor housing, crime and various forms of addiction and dietary challenges for the poor suggest that, in terms of wellbeing and happiness, life in the modern mega city may be less than ideal for the poor.

The project research recognises that there may be a delicate and difficult path to tread between supporting indigenous communities' resilience to combat the forces threatening their way of life and the increasing onset of climate catastrophe without undermining their community, culture, and identity. Another dimension to this research, however, is the search to understand what lessons and knowledge transfer opportunities for the development of policy in the support and development of marginalised and excluded communities may emerge from working with the indigenous communities living outside the modern economic system. The marginalised communities within our economies form part of an alienated strata at the bottom of, or excluded altogether from, a dual labour market (Averitt, 1968), which, with the development of technology since the 1960s, has resulted in a technologically dual labour market itself a barrier to social mobility (Norgaard, 2003). Globalization has reduced the real taxable revenues that could have funded a welfare grounded social democracy. Thus, poverty is increasing in the midst of affluence and high GDP figures as governments cut back in real terms their social welfare budgets.

2. The Indian Experience

What follows in this section is a summary of part of my PhD research. There is a substantial number of indigenous people, generally referred to as 'Adivasi', in India. The term has a Sanskrit origin meaning 'one who is living in a location from very olden times', thus the original inhabitants of the land (Kulkarni, 1974). These are communities not forming part of the mainstream ethnic grouping in India's population today and their rights are often ignored. They generally lack the knowledge and resources to defend themselves from predatory attacks by members of the dominant ethnic groups. The major economic issue faced by these communities is the lack of organized markets as well as financial institutions to promote their products. But simply providing for more effective marketing for their craft-based artifacts, textiles, ornaments, paintings, potteries, cane and bamboo products, and organic and natural food products may not be sufficient to protect their communities. They may need infrastructure to help them manage their increased income which can have negative as well as positive impacts. Indigenous communities may need infrastructure to develop cultural solidarity and climate resilience as well as building greater local food security in the context of increasing national shortages and inflation. Minorities are vulnerable to persecution in times of national crisis even though they had no role in its cause. Increased affluence can also lead to them losing their historic cohesion and falling prey to the worst corrosive elements that afflict mainstream societies, such as drugs, alcoholism, and a drifting away from community values. In this way the community fails to profit from its produce (Muniraju & Sirisha, n.d.).

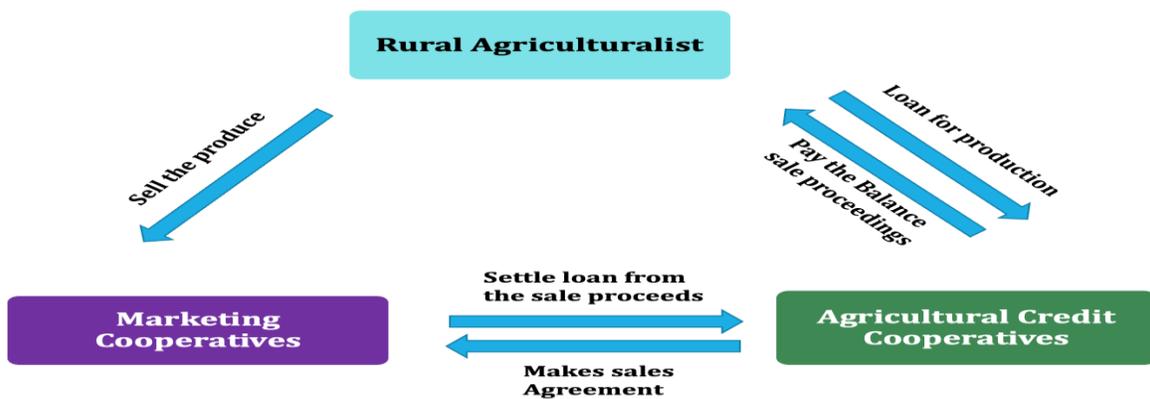
Engagement for resilience requires those agencies promoting co-operative solutions to recognise and research the specific features of the indigenous community, informed by a recognition that such peoples are hesitant to allow access to anyone outside their own community. They are suspicious because the indigenous communities have been exploited in the past and currently, and such negative experiences make them less open to the possibilities of engagement with the wider society / economy. My PhD research project aimed to understand how the Co-operative Marketing Framework developed from the existing agricultural credit co-operative models established elsewhere, was being replicated among the indigenous co-operatives in Kerala. It explored Government policies for implementing the concept of linking credit with marketing and developing a Co-operative Marketing Framework to resolve the disadvantaged circumstances faced by these Indigenous communities. The hope was that such a strategy would contribute towards attaining some of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Why the Indian Government sought a Co-operative Solution rather than a social enterprise model

A paradigm shift had triggered a strategic re-focus resulting in the rise of the concept of the social enterprise (Agarwal et al., 2018). The area of social entrepreneurship has been portrayed as a phenomenon created to address urgent social challenges through innovation on a global scale (Osberg & Martin, 2007). The advantages of co-operatives as subsumed within the social enterprise concept as ensuring inclusive sustainable development was seen to be more profound. Co-operatives are grounded not simply in economic development per se but in community building economic development and individual education. *Co-operatives are the type of institution for whom economics is a means not an end.* Co-operatives are institutions grounded in an inclusive idea, addressing larger social concerns, although their inherent nature is highly focused on distributive economic attributes (Franco et al., 2010). The success story of co-operatives in the end is usually connected with those co-operatives that have been created to overcome all aspects of human need (Alavosius et al., 2009). The utility of co-operatives for serving the underprivileged population is very much an indicator of the importance of co-operatives in the context of inclusive sustainable development (Castilla-Polo & Sánchez-Hernández, 2020). In short, co-operatives, once facilitated in partnership with the state, can proceed to exist without the state’s continuing involvement. They can operate autonomously with other market actors providing services to their members and their communities. Co-operation was very central to post-imperial India.

Statistical data on co-operatives in India show that there is a larger presence of co-operatives in the rural landscape, which is precisely the context for the indigenous communities (Ghosh, 2007). It may also be stated that the countryside is also the focal point for conflict. Without research and policy actions now, pressure on land usage, water supply and rising populations can be expected to exacerbate these tensions in the future. The number of co-operatives in India is 0.8 million and the membership strength is around 274 million. It is a fact that most such co-operatives work in rural India (Mohammed, 2015). The concept of linking credit with marketing means the Credit / Agricultural credit co-operatives provide loans to the rural agriculturalist and direct them to sell their products in the marketing co-operatives concerned. Once the products are delivered, the marketing co-operatives will settle the loan amount with the credit co-operatives and the balance is paid to the rural agriculturalist. This familiar framework for linking credit with the marketing concept is explained in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Linking Credit with the Marketing Framework



This model has a tried and tested record of helping prevent the rural agriculturalists from getting exploited by intermediaries and loan sharks.

Are top-down strategies the right approach?

The research needs to establish how adaptable a multi-purpose co-operative entity might be to build upon existing traditional relationships. Such relationships are not grounded in financial systems with avenues for availing credit, or a place to store or sell their produce. The formation of Large-sized Adivasi Multi-Purpose Societies (LAMPS) was suggested by the Bawa Committee, which was implemented in different parts of India and in almost all provinces

(Lele & Rao, 1996). These top-down co-operatives were to deal with those indigenous communities who were seen as ill-equipped to identify and respond to the nuances of the complex developed structure of the present political system. This initiative, however, generally failed, resulting in the closing down of LAMPS in different parts of the country. The government of Kerala, a State in the southwestern part of the Indian subcontinent also took up this central government initiative but many of these co-operatives are closed or moving towards closing due to financial and marketing issues (Lele & Rao, 1996).

In Kerala, Co-operatives for Indigenous communities are categorized as Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) co-operatives. As per the statistics of 2022, there were 99 ST Co-operatives among which only 52 are functioning now. In the case of SC Co-operatives, among 738 only 382 are functioning now (Department of Co-operation, Government of Kerala, n.d.). *The lessons of these failures are an important starting point for further research into the applications of credit with marketing co-operatives to support indigenous communities.* Co-operatives as a genuine approach towards community growth and development must first be the result of voluntary engagement. The key co-operative principle of Voluntarism is the starting point. The indigenous people's engagement with co-operatives must be based on their perception of their needs and feeling they are in control and have ownership of the project. Research therefore needs to be informed by an ethnographic grounding to establish indigenous community needs as defined by the indigenous community itself.

The Census 2011 shows the Indian indigenous population constitutes about 8.9% of the total population in India. They are spread across the country and reside in the forest and hilly regions of the country. But they are ignorant of their rights and lack access to the mainstream (Muniraju & Sirisha, n.d.). Some authorities argue there is a need to sensitize the indigenous population about the importance and values of socio-economic concepts and structures (Novkovic & Golja, 2015). However, it may be that the introduction of co-operative marketing structures needs to be built up through pinpointing indigenous community needs as the first step. Secondly, through discussion of their grievances we may be able to identify and access resources through co-operative action to enforce their legal rights. At an appropriate time, supported by established co-operatives, NGOs and state agencies from the mainstream community, it may be possible to engage with the indigenous communities on their terms rather than that of the state. The evidence demonstrates that simply attempting to transfer top-down models based on contemporary society and history does not work. The global climate crisis and hegemonic superpower rivalries, polarized societies, and the technological ecology informing globalization might give 'experts' from the developed world pause for reflection and even humility. India's co-operative strategies as in all countries do not take place in a vacuum but in a political economic context.

3. Co-operative Internationalism versus Neoliberalism's Globalization

There are three rival ideological perspectives as to how capitalism should be operated. Neoliberalism (USA), authoritarian capitalism (China today but there have been different manifestations across the previous two centuries), and social democratic capitalism (European Union). The first has been particularly active fueling the globalization process that seeks to place all human institutions and societies under the sway of a so-called market economy driven by consumer choice. In fact, as the technological revolution progressed, a surveillance economy emerged dominated by giant platform capitalisms in the US, and huge state-controlled corporations in China. The fourth model is more a rough blanket term, 'crony capitalism' (found in most of southeast and central Asia, Africa and Latin America) where varying degrees of democracy exist but which in all cases are manipulated by ruling elites (Davis, 2022). Co-operatives offer principles and purpose that is human centered. Their values and principles around the world are in direct contrast to Authoritarian and Neoliberal forms of Capitalism but are consistent with Social Democratic Capitalism and have the possibility to gradually transform the various forms of crony capitalism into Social Democratic polities (Davis, 2022). It is important to recognize these macro differences in political economic formation of capitalism in philosophy and ideology at the global level when operating at the local level. These contexts form an often critical and sometimes insurmountable barrier for protecting indigenous communities and generating democracy, welfare, and distributive justice. As a result, Co-operatives are themselves a contested terrain (Davis, 2022). Co-operatives can be used for control by the state and the elites who control it. Maintaining ownership of the land is the critical role for a co-operation that seeks to emancipate the poor everywhere. The key to indigenous people's development and emancipation as opposed to their incorporation and extinction lies in their holding onto

the land. Co-operative interventions must aim to support the poor everywhere in holding onto their land where they have any.

Community led Co-operative Development

All Co-operatives need development and strengthening by implementing innovative strategies to build resilience to their, often hostile, political contexts, the numerous existential threats their members face, and to support outreach to the poor both urban and rural. There are particularly acute challenges for indigenous communities. Notwithstanding, the research will probe the possibility of such communities providing lessons applicable to the wider context of an increasingly excluded and marginalized class. Whilst in theory it has been argued any organizational structure has an inbuilt concept of establishing a separate wing for innovative products that could contribute to society, it must be conceded that service-driven not-for-profit organizations with co-operative structures and principles are more likely to want to do so. The 'Ambidextrous Organization' is an organizational development concept coined by R. Duncan (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). It indicates an organization's ability to be aligned and efficient in its management of today's business demands, as well as being adaptive to changes in the external environment.

Co-operatives, with their identity and commitment to care for the community, need more than any other to develop innovative strategies which will help in coping with the mounting threats and instabilities arising from globalization and the economic and political polarization. Climate change and a technological revolution that threatens to get out of control may but put co-operative purpose and the social democratic framework of political economy beyond reach. Co-operatives, by carrying through the concept of linking credit with marketing *when focused on community development*, might generate economic resources for resilient local communities. Thus, protecting respect and identity within indigenous peoples' traditions whilst responding to the pressures generated by modernity's positive and negative consequences is the focus of the proposed research. This requires exploring the possibilities from within the indigenous and marginalized communities. If a co-operative marketing framework can be developed to serve community without seriously disrupting the subsistence economy, then researchers may be close to a strategy for transforming the welfare and opportunities for impoverished communities across the globe without adopting the economics of a growth led consumerism that threatens the planet ecologically and humans physically and spiritually (Pope Francis, 2013; Alford, 2019). The possibility of a co-operative marketing framework needs to be explored that sees community determined development goals informing credit and marketing strategies. Establishing 'Concern for Community' principle 7 in the ICA Co-operative Identity Statement as one that informs the development of business strategy might well be considered a very different approach in many co-operative circles and may require an evolution from an economic functionalism that has informed traditional co-operatives as they have evolved over the last century and more. This may require co-operative 'ambidextrous' organizations, i.e., departments developed to integrate business policy to support the indigenous community development, not top down, but rather one that has been evolved out of the indigenous peoples' struggle to survive and prosper. Such a framework may be of wider use in any part of the world or in any community seeking to preserve its way of life in the face of globalization, climate change and the digital revolution. For such local resilience to be protected may require an intensive global co-operative ideological awareness and even ideological repositioning (see for example, Puusa, et al., 2022).

4. Co-operative Marketing Framework (CMF)

A key element of the research will require a thorough investigation of the published research evaluating the Co-operative Marketing Framework, and the trading and other that emerge.

4.1 Stages of the Co-operative Marketing Framework

Suggestions for different process stages of the Co-operative Marketing Framework are explained as follows:

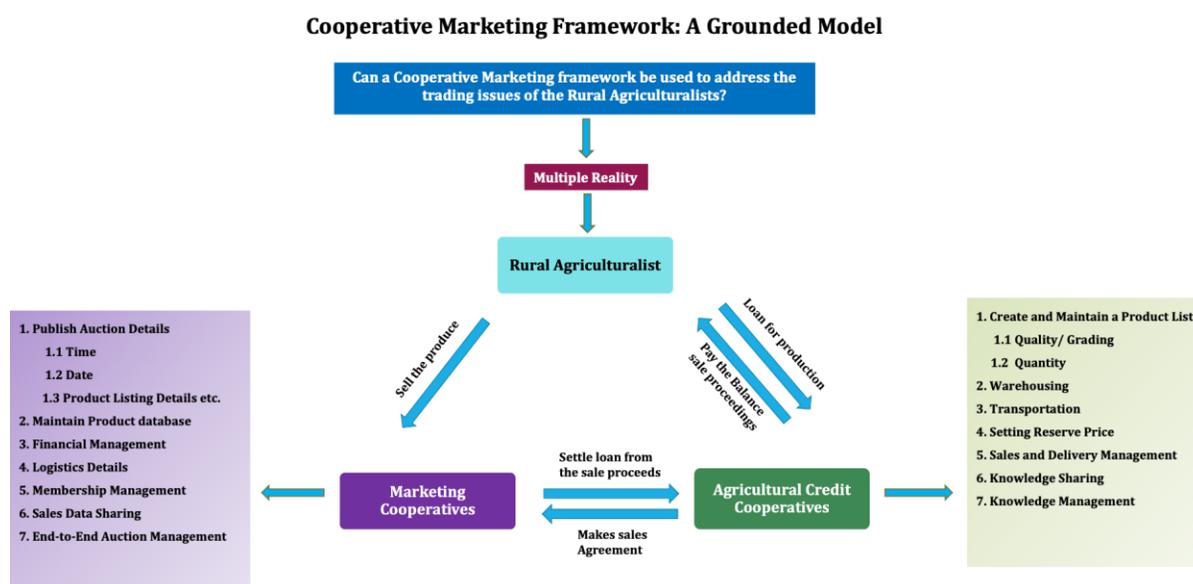
- Firstly, the rural agriculturalist who is in need of loans for the production of their agricultural produce has to approach their agricultural credit co-operative.

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- Then the co-operatives have to verify the documents and get the details about the product from the rural agriculturalist, so as to access the type and approximate amount of the products to be produced.
- After the harvest the rural Agriculturalists have to deliver the products to the concerned marketing co-operatives. Ideally, the product description, quantity and quality, and so on will be submitted along with it.
- In the next stage, the Marketing co-operatives have to verify the corresponding product quantity and quality and complete a proper grading process.
- Then the marketing co-operatives will settle the amount with the agricultural credit co-operatives and the balance amount after settling the loan will be paid to the rural agriculturalists.

Hence the co-operative marketing framework can act as a communication channel and one-stop shop for rural agriculturalists, with the ability to develop sales and market data for forecasting.

Figure 1.2: Co-operative Marketing Framework: A Grounded Model



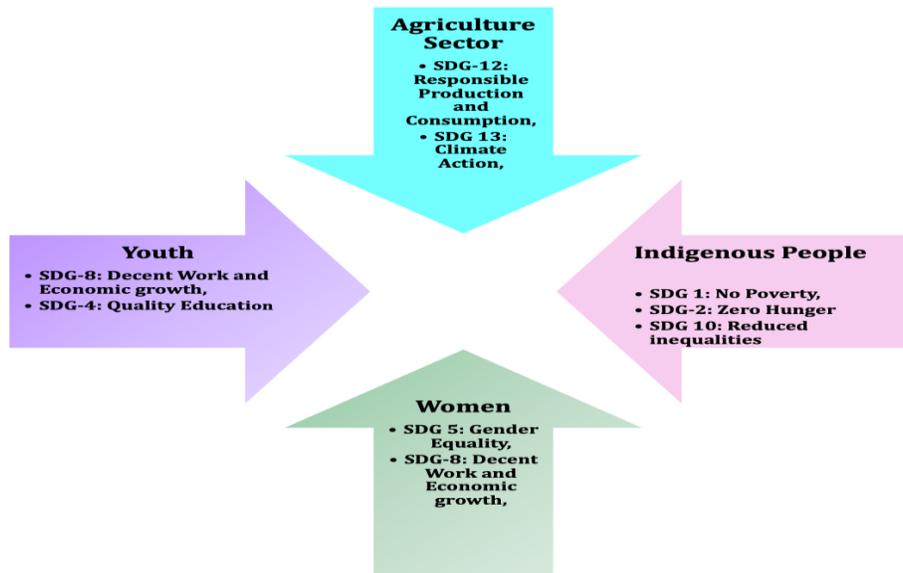
4.2 Aims of Co-operative Marketing Framework

The main aim of creating such a Cooperative Marketing Framework is to provide for rural agriculturalists critical services in non-exploitative conditions. The major benefits are envisaged as follows:

- Creating benefits for the Rural agriculturalists
- Avoiding the intermediaries of trading channels
- Forecasting the demand and supply
- Planning the trading in advance
- Enabling transparent transactions
- Reducing bad debts
- Levelling Up by providing an opportunity for growth
- Developing a database for the agricultural produce
- Creation of a Cooperative Marketing Framework
- Addressing the principles of 'Cooperation among Cooperatives' and 'Concern for Community'
- Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

The Co-operative Marketing Framework will help rural agriculturalists avoid getting exploited by intermediaries and fetch the best price for their products. On top of this, as Figure 1.3 shows, the model will help to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 12 and 13- No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Gender equality, Reduced inequalities, Decent work, Responsible Consumption and Production and Climate action.

Figure 1.3: Contribution towards the Sustainable Development Goals



5. Statement of the Problem

5.1 Primary Research Questions

Co-operatives are possibly the best form of organisation to find a solution for the difficult circumstances that can arise due to oppressive regimes, technological change, and market forces leading to impoverishment of workers, producers, and consumers (Ramkishan, 2009). They can also be argued to be better than other forms of social enterprise because their members are the real owners of the organisation. Transparency in their democratic model of governance, while far from perfect in practice (Davis, 2017), is better placed than most of the alternatives to ensure that they will not do any harm to their members or the wider society (Cull et al., 2007). Co-operatives do not guarantee a move towards sustainable living and the defence of community against agribusiness plantations, but their principles and values - where they are followed - strongly imply such outcomes. An important aspect of this research will be to explore the answer to the following question:

1. *How far is an agricultural marketing model relevant to the needs of a subsistence-economy - based community in crisis?*

In the Indian context, the major characteristic of the indigenous community can be explained as isolation, social, economic and cultural. Lacking proper infrastructural facilities and so forth for their integration into mainstream society and economy (Sharma, 1987), the Indigenous are viewed as 'backward' by the policy makers in Government and by majority opinion in India. Viewed as 'illiterate', meaning they do not speak the lingua franca of the mainstream, the lives of the indigenous population are isolated from the rest of the world in the hills and forests. This is viewed as a major reason for their 'socio-economic backwardness', their alienation and their alleged inability to harness the available resources in an advantageous manner as measured by the western model of economic rationality. They neither have the right over the resources as bestowed by the State, which they extract, nor do they have proper transportation or communication, and they 'lack proper awareness' in terms of market rationality. Modernisation, so it is argued, will facilitate the economic uplifting of these peoples, and will certainly go a long way in ameliorating the variety of problems faced by these communities (Mahalingam, 1990). There is a growing body of

research, however, that challenges this view of the indigenous communities (UN Environment Programme, 2020). In some parts of the world their agricultural and forest land faces deforestation and plantation movements by outside commercial interests and there is also exploitation by money lenders, middlemen, and traders (Hajela, 2010). To solve these issues and to make sure that justice is served will require sensitive co-operative research focused on the preservation of their communities as the priority evaluated against benefits of models of modernisation and integration into the globalised economy. The aim would be to continue the indigenous community accessibility to forest products, develop appropriate job opportunities, credit facilities, housing, irrigation and so forth for their own uses and sale on to others. Thus, the second question the proposed research wants to address is as follows:

2. While creating new avenues for trade, can preserving the indigenous peoples' land, identity, and community be seen as a legitimate sustainable development goal?

Co-operation has been a key element in reform movements since the Industrial Revolution with Britain being the home of some of the earliest experiments of various approaches to co-operative organization and where the first set of co-operative principles was established at the 1832 Congress in London, chaired by Robert Owen (Webb, 1904). The early idea of co-operation and co-operative credit can be found in France, Germany, and North America in the 19th Century and became a key instrument in the management of social problems in the British Empire, first in India, and then wider afield as the model for the rest of British Africa, South East Asia and the Caribbean (Rhodes, 2012). Co-operatives were also used as tools for forced collectivization programs under Communist regimes. It must be recognized, therefore, that globally, co-operation carries a considerable amount of baggage, not all of it positive, and thus research into the application of co-operative solutions to indigenous or marginalized and excluded communities must commence not from the co-operative past but from the global present and the perspectives and needs of the indigenous and marginalized / excluded communities themselves.

In my doctoral research, it was clearly identified that there are a lot of regulatory constraints that restrict the members from using their funds according to their circumstances. There may be a wider need therefore for the co-operative movement to free itself from state controls. A top-down strategy for indigenous co-operatives might be similar to the mainstream approach that sees co-operation as a means to manage poverty, maintain control and to ultimately incorporate those outside of capitalism through loss of their independent means to subsistence. My PhD research brought to light the fact that top-down indigenous co-operatives' regulatory support was inadequate to engage indigenous peoples in India. This research proposal, therefore, is envisaged as a continuation of my post-doctoral study but in terms of seeking bottom-up approaches more concerned with building resilience and community on the terms required by the indigenous peoples themselves. The research literature review recognizes that theoretical models for co-operative organization linking market-based co-operatives in an interface with informal non-monetary community-based co-operatives has been suggested previously but never tested empirically (Davis, 2000). Such an approach leads to the third key question for the proposed research:

3. Can applying the 'ambidextrous' organization model be a facilitator for co-operative community and anti-poverty subsistence strategies to improve marginalized communities' well-being by a limited engagement with the monetary economy and, at the same time, strengthen identity and lifestyle choices?

5.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

- i. What are the issues faced by the indigenous and marginalized / excluded communities?
- ii. To what extent are funding agencies sufficiently sensitive to community priorities?
- iii. To what extent do the resilience priorities of indigenous and marginalized / excluded communities parallel the agenda for preventing climate catastrophe, habitat degradation and species extinction?
- iv. How might developing credit linked to marketing co-operatives with a focus on trading support indigenous peoples and their community priorities and ensure greater resilience?
- v. How might the concept of an 'ambidextrous' organization be a part of co-operatives in the context of the existential crises that confront all communities?

- vi. Could an 'ambidextrous' organization be a facilitator for the formation of co-operative auxiliary organizations to support indigenous and / or other marginalized or excluded communities and all other communities and classes in struggle for justice and peace?
- vii. What are the possible ways through which the issues in trading the produce of the indigenous co-operatives could be resolved?
- viii. Is linking credit with marketing a feasible option for existing indigenous co-operatives?
- ix. What are the legal provisions for linking credit with marketing in the host country?
- x. What are the policy changes that could be adopted for developing a co-operative self-help solution?

5.3 Research Objectives

1. To provide answers to the three overriding research questions.
2. To support the protection of habitat, species, and alternative lifestyles in the face of a homogenization of culture, the destruction of the natural world and the increasing centralization and polarization of power.
3. To find a co-operative strategy which not only preserves existing alternative communities but explores the possibility for those seeking an alternative to the current consumer society and wage-based economy to find a way out.

5.4 Methods and Approach

The research design will involve a cross-sectional study employing a mixed methodology that systematically integrates both qualitative and quantitative data within a single study. The research will need to be informed by an ethnographic approach in collecting community-based data, but placing this in a political, economic and institutional perspective identified from a realist philosophy guided by co-operative ethical values and informed by the four key secular principles of Catholic Social Doctrine, addressed to all men and women of goodwill: the dignity of the individual, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity.

6. Expected results

The proposed research will develop an alternative low to zero growth model for resilience and global cultural heterogeneity as opposed to growth focused on 'trickle-down economics', consumerism and seeking technological solutions to climate change. By exploring the possibility of creating a co-operative marketing framework for produce, the rural agriculturalist can look for a trading channel that could avoid exploitation by the intermediaries and fetch the best prices for their products in an organisational context where transactions are transparent. The research hopes to adapt such a model for improvement of well-being without incorporation and transformation of indigenous and other marginalized / excluded communities' lifestyles and values. In short, a new strategy will be defined for co-operative development grounded in the principle of 'Concern for Community' supported by that other neglected co-operative principle of 'Co-operation among Co-operatives', making possible the development of a sustainable society. The major expectations are as follows:

- The establishment of links between the big financial, agribusiness, consumer co-operatives with micro co-operatives in the low-income sectors of the global economy
- Supporting the indigenous communities and their existing co-operatives
- Sustainable development through an adapted Co-operative Marketing Framework
- Identifying the scope of co-operatives as an Ambidextrous organisation
- Identifying the good life in community, nature conservation, carbon and other pollution reduction, and non-exploitative relationships
- Building towards a human centred and creation centred development model.

The issue is to mobilize the funding to ensure a sufficient number of broad-based research projects across the globe. The above paper is not just a proposal for the project the researcher wants to undertake but a proposal for a thousand community-based research projects supporting indigenous and marginalised / excluded communities and

those who, faced with the existential threats of just carrying on, would like to exclude themselves from the growth led consumer economy.

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