

## **STATES OF CO-OPERATION: PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS**

### **10 February 2025 – AFRICA & CO-OPERATION**

#### **Co-operation in Africa**

##### **Sandy Peeples: Green Revolutionaries: The Tanzanian Co-Operative Moment and the Politics of Agrarian Credit**

The history of Tanzania occupies a central place within scholarship on Africa in the 1960s and 70s. The country's first president, Julius Nyerere, was a leading figure of African decolonization, and by the end of the 1960s through the 1970s Tanzania was the most significant African hub for Pan-Africanism, the Non-Aligned Movement, African liberation struggles, and agrarian socialism. However, Tanzania's vision of an agrarian society was at least as much a question of domestic economies as it was international politics. Prior to the nation's pivot to socialist villages, the initial keystone of this vision was co-ops as a mechanism of channeling a transformative post-decolonization theory of the economy onto the actual scale of a new nation's economy. As a result, attempts to create new credit programs through co-ops took on a singular national and international political importance.

**Sandy Peeples is a PhD Candidate in history at Johns Hopkins University.**

##### **Owusu Boampong: Enablers and Inhibitors of membership decisions of cooperatives in Ghana**

This paper explores the enablers and inhibitors of individuals' membership decisions of cooperatives in Ghana using qualitative design. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with seventeen key informants and ten cooperative members respectively across six financial and agricultural cooperatives. While the volatile financial environment undermines confidence, the credit unions remain attractive due to their goodwill. The minimum requirement of ten people atomizes cooperatives and makes them less impactful. Community development projects boost cooperatives image and attractive to new members. Incumbent members use their met needs to canvass for new members for cooperatives. Credible leadership, good member-staff relationship, ease of transaction, adoption of new technology, accountable, and participatory decision making drive people to join cooperatives. Unhealthy jostling over resources de-motivate individuals to join cooperatives. The misconception that cooperatives are for the poor, the elderly and the cultural practice of barring the youth from partaking in decision-making in the presence of the elderly discourage youth membership. The Department of Cooperative and the cooperatives should educate the public by showcasing successful cases of cooperatives and their benefits to members to dispel the poverty tag to encourage youth membership.

**Dr. Owusu Boampong is a Senior Research Fellow and the Head, Department of Integrated Development Studies, University of Cape Coast. He conducts research and publishes in the areas of informal economy, collective organization and inclusive waste management. He advocates for the empowerment of informal economy workers.**

### **11 February 2025 – THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE**

#### **The Co-operative Council's Innovation Network (CCIN)**

##### **Panel Title: Creating a Toolkit for Cooperative Development by Local Government in the UK**

Funded by the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network and Power to Change a group of UK local authorities led by Kirklees Council have developed a framework and toolkit. It

enables similar organisations to move from a broad aspiration to have more cooperatives, to a clear articulation of what coops and why, with an underpinning action plan of awareness raising, policy change, and direct support. Work was commissioned through the project to address the absence of specific tools to a) strengthen the evidence base for cooperatives in a developed economy setting and b) increase awareness of the breadth of cooperative businesses.

### **Jonathan Nunn: Charting a Path for Local Government Cooperative Development**

The Councils' Cooperative Development Toolkit starts from the common experience of local politicians wanting "more cooperatives" and the need of local authority officers to define targeted, actionable steps appropriate for their context and reflective of local needs. The toolkit starts by going back to basics: types of cooperatives, UK legal context and evidence for their benefits. The framework is then divided into three main areas:

- What can I do? – Walks the reader through the kinds of action available to them.
- Doing your homework – Takes a step-by-step approach to understanding the current state of cooperatives locally and already established local priorities.
- Taking action – Moves the reader into articulating the steps they have identified as necessary through the previous two sections. It also addresses identification of stakeholders and developing a theory of change.

The toolkit emphasises the importance of nurturing existing assets, fostering a supportive culture, and adopting an entrepreneurial mindset.

**Jonathan Nunn MSc, Kirklees Council**

### **Dr Owen Powell: CCIN Co-operative Case Studies 2024**

One of the challenges identified during the development of CCIN's new co-operative development toolkit was the generally low awareness of co-operatives amongst councillors and council officers; more specifically, the range of structural arrangements and business models already present in 'the co-operative economy'. Another is that, often, council officers are often told by elected members that they should pursue 'more co-ops' but without clarity of the type of co-operatives or for what end. As part of addressing that challenge, Dr Owen Powell (York St John University) was commissioned to create a set of case studies that used a standardised, information-dense, yet flexible framework with a view to informing and inspiring councillors and council officers. This paper will discuss the development of the case study frame, the identification of desirable co-operatives, and walk-through several examples from the case study pack.

**Dr Owen Powell, York St John University**

### **Dr Catherine Brentnall: Cooperative Business Impacts – A Rapid, Realist Perspective**

Better evidence is needed about the impact of cooperatives, as well as more knowledge about the breadth, depth and complexity of the cooperative movement. In 2024, a Rapid Evidence Review was published about plural ownership effects, which found that overall "there is no strong evidence for or against claims about the importance of plural ownership for firm performance" (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2024a, p. 3). The 'What Works' perspective is underpinned by a particular set of assumptions which value

certain types of research approaches and evaluations, tending to generate certain sorts of judgements. This paper provides an alternative perspective; expanding evaluative thinking, beyond 'What Works' towards 'What works for whom and why'. It introduces a Realist perspective on evidence and evaluation, which has been developed to embrace the complexity of social phenomena and moves beyond average effect sizes as the best way to understand or articulate impact.

**Dr Catherine Brentnall, Manchester Metropolitan University**

### **Local Co-operative Initiatives**

#### **Julian Manley 'We are ... building up a State within a State...': Social value, co-operation, community wealth building and the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network**

In 1914, W.H. Watkins described the creation of co-operatives as a project to build up a 'State within a State', a system of work that contrasted with the capitalist State. Sometimes, contemporary co-operative systems such as the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (MCC) can appear to be a systems in their own right. The MCC is forced to work within a capitalist framework but at the same time adopts its own economic, social and systemic framework. This alternative framework comes with alternative values and virtues which imply a different perspective on the interpretation of what a good life might mean. The development of a Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) in the UK might be approached in this way, as a 'State within a State', where economic and social systems do not primarily adhere to the 'official' nation State. This emerging 'State' is more than a template or idea, it is a constantly developing alternative which is presently developing thinking and practical applications of the key areas of this 'State', such as toolkits on co-operation and social value. This paper will examine the development of a social value toolkit for the CCIN as work towards systemic change that challenges habitual assumptions of what it is to live in a nation State.

**Julian Manley is Professor of Social Innovation in the Institute for Planetary Resilience and Community Transformation (PACT), University of Central Lancashire.**

#### **David Webb & Gabriel Silvestre: The uses of the Preston model in Newcastle and Gateshead**

A sizeable literature, with some influence, has emerged that seeks to position 'The Preston Model' as a practical agenda for combatting both the effects and the logics of public sector austerity. Comparisons have been drawn with the European New Municipalist response to neoliberalism and efforts have been made to replicate the model via the work of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. This paper appraises the translation of the model as a guide for local action in Newcastle and Gateshead: adjoining authorities which have experienced contrasting political and economic environments. It reveals advanced austerity as a challenging climate for community wealth building, while opportunities to attract private development can crowd out political support. The paper questions the opportunity cost of such exogenous fixes relative to supporting the slow growth of the co-operative sector.

**David Webb is Senior Lecturer in Planning at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK. He is a contributor to the 16th edition of Town and Country Planning in the UK, Routledge and his broader work explores the roles of the political in shaping urban futures. For nine years he was the secretary of Greening Wingrove & Arthur's Hill neighbourhood co-operative in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne.**

**Gabriel Silvestre is Senior Lecturer in Planning at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK. His work explores the governance of mega projects and mega events and he is a member of the EU Horizon funded project Contested Territories. He is an editor of Insurgent Planning Practice, Agenda Publishing, 2024.**

### **British Co-operation: Some Historical Perspectives**

#### **Yanfeng Wang : Extend Co-operative to the Poor: Sunderland experiment of Women's Co-operative Guild**

This paper examines the rise and fall of the Coronation Street settlement experiment in Sunderland between 1902-1904. Led by the Women's Co-operative Guild, the settlement aimed to extend the benefits of consumer co-operatives to the impoverished. The apparent early success generated optimism about co-operatives' potential for poverty alleviation. However, the settlement relied heavily on elite supporters within the movement. When they withdrew, economically and ideologically opposed board members terminated the experiment in 1904 amidst accusations of preferential treatment and wasteful spending. The end of the experiment reflected the contradiction between the progressive orientation of the settlement and the liberal stance of the board. Ideological conflicts within the co-operatives and the effects of the capitalist depression acted as resistance to the expansion of co-operatives beyond the affluent working class. This study of localization reveals the complex dynamics of social reform initiatives undertaken within the constraints of industrial capitalism.

Yanfeng Wang is a PhD student in the History Department at the University of Birmingham, conducting research under the supervision of Professor Mo Moulton and Dr. Simon Jackson on the overseas expansion of the British co-operative movement.

#### **Anthony Webster & John F. Wilson: Co-operation and the British State since 1844: A Reluctant and Volatile Relationship of Convenience?**

Seen by many as the birthplace of co-operation, Britain's experience of co-operation has differed radically from other countries. Dominated by the consumer movement, British co-operation's relationship with the British state has fluctuated dramatically over time. At times shunned by the British state, but at other times courted by it, co-operation's ability to shape the political and economic environment in which it operates has ebbed and flowed with these shifting trends – but arguably the net consequence has been a relatively disappointing record of stifled co-operative influence over policy, law and the economy.

This paper will examine the shifting attitudes and relations between the British co-operative movement with the British state, focusing upon local, national and imperial government. Specifically, it will explain the factors shaping the relationship; the role of anti-co-operative movements (especially consumer organizations), the ideological inclinations of both government and the political parties, the needs of the British Empire, and the intermittent problems which led to collaboration with the movement by necessity, such as war. It will also examine the structure and political strategies of the movement itself, and how these affected relations. Finally, the paper will posit some ideas on how a stronger relationship might be forged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Anthony Webster and John F. Wilson are both Professors in the Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. John was previously PVC for the School.**

## **12 February 2025 – CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE AND THE EAST**

### **Japan, China & Australia – some case studies**

#### **Greg Patmore and Nikola Balnave: Self-help and the State – the Australian Experience**

This paper develops a framework for understanding the relationship between the state and co-operatives. It explores the framework by examining the long-term relationship between the state and co-operatives in Australia. Despite the philosophy of self-help, the Australian state has played an important role in providing a legal framework to ensure incorporation and protect the term 'co-operative'. State government registrars of co-operatives have also played an important role in promoting the co-operative business model. The state has gone even further by introducing legislation to promote the formation of different types of co-operatives to meet public policy objectives. These include co-operative building societies to promote home ownership, housing co-operatives to assist low income earners and worker co-operatives to maintain employment. The Australian state has also challenged co-operatives, particularly with the rise of Neoliberalism, openly preferring investor owned businesses, encouraging demutualisation and even discriminating against co-operatives.

**Greg Patmore is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney Business School. He is the co-author of A Global History of Co-operative Business (Routledge, 2018) the author of The Innovative Consumer Co-operative: The Rise and the Fall of Berkeley (Routledge, 2020), and co-author of A History of Australian Co-operatives 1827-2023 (Routledge, 2024).**

**Nikola Balnave is an Associate Professor in the Macquarie Business School at Macquarie University. She is a labour and business historian with a primary focus on co-operatives and the co-operative movement over space and time. Nikki is the co-author of A Global History of Co-operative Business (Routledge, 2018) and A History of Australian Co-operatives 1827-2023 (Routledge, 2024).**

#### **Professor Akira Kurimoto: Cooperative healthcare and eldercare to cope with the aging society: a case of health co-ops in Japan**

The rapidly aging population combined with low fertility in Japan caused serious problems in both service delivery and financing for healthcare and eldercare. Japan accomplished the universal healthcare in 1961 and started the Long-term Care Insurance system in 1990. Patients' free access to medical institutions caused the congestion at large hospitals while service provision is not necessarily coordinated. The rapid aging and the growing expectations of patients pushed the costs that constitute 40% of annual budget. The government pursued to build community-based integrated care system (CICS). Under such circumstances, health co-ops have encouraged patients to undertake the health promotion and combined it with medical and long-term care aiming to build healthy communities. Such activities are often seen as a model of CICS. This presentation will discuss the context, brief history, structure, impact and challenges of health co-ops.

**Professor Akira Kurimoto, Hosei University, Tokyo. He a founder of the Asia Pacific Cooperative Research Partnership, and Chair of the ICA-AP Research Committee.**

#### **Ali-AI Assam: Cooperatives in China**

This paper explores the dynamic and evolving cooperative sector in China, emphasising its significant growth in relation to a key aspect of increasing relevance to the global cooperative movement; that is the role that the cooperative movement can play in the social and political transformation of society, and how such role was practised in China.

The paper traces the origins of the cooperative movement as part of the early 20th-century social reform and anti-colonial movements, before delving into the later legislative frameworks. Notably, the Specialised Farmer Cooperatives Law of 2007 and the Revised Company Law of 2024 have collectively enhanced democratic governance and economic participation within cooperatives. However, the sector has faced challenges in the implementation of these laws, which have been gradually addressed over time.

China's cooperative landscape is vast, encompassing over 2 million agricultural cooperatives that engage nearly 100 million households. This growth is complemented by a later trend towards supporting worker cooperatives, reflecting the government's commitment to boosting employment and income growth. The paper also compares the governance structures of Chinese cooperatives with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) principles, noting that while Chinese cooperatives align with ICA guidelines on democratic governance, the integration of Communist Party oversight adds a unique dimension to their operational structure.

The paper includes a detailed case study of the Lu Wei Agricultural Machinery Farmers' Professional Cooperative in Jilin province, visited by the authors. The cooperative's governance model, which features democratic decision-making and equitable profit-sharing, exemplifies broader economic and social reforms in China aimed at improving cooperative efficiency and member engagement.

#### **Ali-AI Assam, NewSocial Co-operative**

### **Italy & Europe: Some Historical & Contemporary Studies**

#### **Dr Gábor Koloh: Consumer cooperatives in Hungary (1898–1923)**

My research questions focus on the development of consumer cooperatives in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary. What was the amount of turnover of these cooperatives and who established them? How can the intervention of the political elite in their operation be captured and why did industrial workers and left-wing movements fail to play such a dominant role in the creation and operation of consumer cooperatives as in other parts of Europe?

In Central-Eastern Europe, the development of cooperatives was based on the Austrian Co-operative Law of 1873. While within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Austria and the Czech Lands had a stronger industrial and merchant class, Hungary was an agrarian country. This difference determined the varying direction of development of cooperatives from country to country, while the beginnings, and thus the organisation from above, were very similar (Brazda et al. 2017).

In agrarian countries, the spread of consumer cooperatives helped to develop peasant farming (Fernandez 2014). The organisational and structural effects of this on the development of the agrarian sector have been studied by several authors (for a summary, see Mordhorst & Jensen 2020). The first 'Hangya' cooperatives were established in the eastern and north-western regions of Hungary, where the proportion of smallholder farmers was higher. The paper will examine their specificities in the light of the above international findings. For example, did consumer and producer cooperatives primarily promote cooperation among wealthier farmers and thus protect poorer farmers less?

The small rural settlements in West Hungary suffered a significant loss of labour during the period, due to high rates of internal migration. In this paper I will examine whether these settlements were less able to maintain cooperatives with a complex operational profile and therefore several settlements and micro-regions tended to maintain one together? Is this

supported by the fact that consumption and production cooperatives with a simpler operational profile, especially milk and egg cooperatives, which were established independently of 'Hangya', have also proved viable in the small villages of the South West?

My paper aims to analyse the spread of consumer cooperatives in Central and Eastern Europe, the social embeddedness of agribusiness and their policy context.

**Dr Gábor Koloh is Assistant Professor in the Elte Faculty of Humanities in Budapest.**

**Dr Tommaso Milani: The Quest for Economic Democracy: The Italian Co-Operative Movement and the Challenge of the Post-War State (1945-1954 ca.)**

Democratising the economic system was a key concern for Italian co-operators who revived and relaunched their movement after WWII. Nevertheless, profound disagreements soon emerged about the actual meaning of democracy and the role of the post-war state in bolstering it. While Catholic and liberal-democratic co-operators generally supported economic decentralisation and the voluntary association of small economic units, Communist co-operators – heavily influenced by the Soviet experiment – envisaged co-operation mainly as a training ground for a future, state led collectivistic order. Ideological polarisation was further exacerbated by tensions about membership within the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), which Italian co-operators had quickly rejoined, and major domestic political events, including the breakdown of the coalition between anti-fascist parties in 1947 and the landmark 1948 election. As a result, co-operators struggled to work together and defend common interests effectively, which arguably halted or slowed down the growth and consolidation of Italian co-ops at a critical time.

**Tommaso Milani is a Research Fellow at the ISB-RUB, studying the Western European co-operative movement from a comparative perspective. A former EUI Max Weber Fellow, he holds a PhD in International History from the LSE, taught at Oxford and Sciences Po Paris, and published his first monograph in 2020.**

**Francesca Gabriellini: Cooperatives... for Future? The Cooperative Model in the Reorganization of Work, Production, and Public Communication in Response to the New Challenges of Ecological Transition. From Coop Emilia Veneto to Coop Alleanza 3.0: History and Trajectories of Environmental and Social Sustainability.**

In 2020, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Guy Ryder, noted that "the cooperative model aligns short-term actions with long-term visions, offering valuable insights into how to address global crises, whether the pandemic or climate change." This statement underscores the growing global recognition of the ecological transition's urgency, which presents significant challenges for the cooperative system. Cooperatives, as organizational models that promote medium- and long-term actions, are seen as crucial in responding to ecological and social emergencies exacerbated by the global pandemic and the ongoing climate and energy crises. Key questions arise: how can work and production be reorganized to preserve employment while mitigating environmental and energy impacts? How can ethical, transparent, accessible, and sustainable supply chains be developed? And how can community participation be encouraged, reimagining urban and physical spaces as arenas for disseminating values and implementing best practices? These questions are increasingly central for both public and private actors as they are called to rethink the interconnections between work and environment, consumption and the environment, and the role of communication and education in shaping practices aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda and the Italian Recovery Plan.

This research seeks to historicize and interpret the role played by Italian consumer

cooperatives, with particular reference to the Emilia-Romagna and Veneto regions, focusing on the case study of Coop Emilia Veneto. It examines how cooperatives addressed environmental issues between 1980 and 1990, with the goal of decoding the relationship between the environmental crisis, the transformation of consumer society, and cooperative enterprise policies during this period. The analysis highlights corporate policies, consumer education strategies, and interactions with public institutions, which together reshaped the "producer-consumer-territory trilemma."

The research is grounded in a rich collection of documents housed at the Italian Documentation Centre for Cooperation and the Social Economy in Bologna. These include not only corporate records but also company magazines, which offer valuable insights into the values promoted by cooperatives and the concrete practices of consumer education they implemented over time. Notably, monthly magazines such as \*Consumatori\*, \*Movimento Cooperativo\*, \*Quarantacinque\*, and \*Coop Info\* served as key tools for disseminating cooperative values, events, new products, and sociopolitical activities. Through a variety of columns designed to guide consumers in making purchasing decisions and adopting sustainable lifestyles, these magazines reflect over fifty years of cooperative life and the evolution of both Italian and international cooperative history. They also suggest an alternative model of economic and socially desirable production and consumption relations.

Additionally, this research benefits from the collaboration with the Legacoop Studies Area (Bologna), which facilitated connections between past environmental policies and current socio-political demands through a series of interviews with key witnesses of cooperative transformations, as well as with current managers in the areas of Education, Public Relations, Ethics, and Sustainability.

**Francesca Gabriellini is a PhD student at the University of Bologna**

### **Professor Vera Negri Zamagni: How Italian Social Cooperatives have been successful in giving work to disadvantaged people. A case study**

Italy has been the country where an original and new form of cooperative enterprise was conceived since the 1960s and got a specific legislation in 1991: the social cooperative, which offers personal services like kindergarten, old people retirement places, sanitary services (type A) and organizes working activity for disadvantaged people, allowing them to employ their time fruitfully and earn a wage (type B). The paper aims to discuss this second type of social cooperatives, which kind of jobs they can arrange and supervise, how large is their impact in the various areas of Italy and how they are governed. A case study which has been object of research by the present author and has recently been published (*La cooperativa sociale Giotto. Una normalità eccezionale*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2024) shows that it is even possible to include convicts among the disadvantaged people to whom to offer a job.

**Vera Negri Zamagni is Senior Adjunct Professor at SAIS Europe Professor of economic history, University of Bologna**

## **13 February 2025 – CO-OPERATIVES AND THE WORLD**

### **Co-operation: Some Key Global Themes**

### **Zoé Marlier & Frédéric Dufays: How do women experience democracy at work? The case of cooperatives**



Democracy is frequently celebrated as the ideal governance model. Yet for over fifty years, feminist critiques have questioned its capacity to ensure true equality, suggesting that democratic systems may perpetuate gendered inequalities. This study explores cooperatives, often seen as epitomes of democratic and egalitarian workplaces, to investigate how democratic principles play out in practice concerning gender dynamics. Following a phenomenological approach on semi-structured interviews, the research reveals women's lived experiences within these organizations, highlighting the complex and sometimes unequal manifestations of democracy in workplace settings. By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, the paper aims to contribute to broader discussions on democracy and gender equity. The findings highlight significant gaps in addressing women's realities within democratic frameworks and call for a rethinking of democracy that is both gender-sensitive and systemically inclusive, challenging prevailing assumptions and advocating for transformative change.

**Zoé Marlier.** I am a PhD student at the Centre for Social Economy of the University of Liège in Belgium. After a master in social transitions and innovations, I started my PhD in October 2024. My thesis is about the relation between democratic practices and gender equality within cooperatives. [zoe.marlier@uliege.be](mailto:zoe.marlier@uliege.be)

**Frédéric Dufays.** I am an Associate professor at the Centre for Social Economy at ULiège and at KU Leuven. My research deals principally with the democratic practices in cooperative. [frederic.dufays@uliege.be](mailto:frederic.dufays@uliege.be)

### **Stefano Tortorici Redefining Platform Cooperatives: Identities, Dimensions and Challenges.**

A young and digital cooperative movement is trying to establish in reaction to the triumphant platform capitalism of the last thirty years. Despite the growing scholarship, the numbers and dimensions of platform cooperatives are not well known. There are no quantitative studies describing a large number of platform cooperatives. This paper constitutes a first attempt to map platform cooperatives globally. On the basis of the first international economic survey on platform cooperatives, it constitutes a comprehensive international economic chart of the identities, dimensions and challenges of platform cooperatives. Data from 86 businesses registered legally in 5 continents outline the identities, workforce dynamics, financial investments, governance mechanisms, the use of digital technologies and the challenges of 27 platform cooperatives. The paper distinguishes platform cooperativism from platform cooperatives, and it addresses definitional issues that have arisen since they were firstly defined. It finally offers a grounded understanding of platform cooperatives' challenges and their most up-to-date empirical picture.

**Stefano Tortorici** is a PhD Candidate in Political Science and Sociology at Scuola Normale Superiore, a member of the Centre on Social Movement Studies (Cosmos), and research affiliate of the Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy (ICDE) at the New School of New York. His research focus on possible solutions to the challenges of finance and scale of platform cooperatives.

### **Co-operation: Global Organization and its Challenges**

### **Dr Samuel Boscarello: A European Social Laboratory: Rediscovering the Origins of the International Co-operative Alliance (1848-1895)**

This contribution, based on a recent doctoral dissertation, examines the emergence of internationalism within the European co-operative movement during the latter half of the 19th century, challenging conventional perspectives on its origins. It argues that co-operative

internationalism was shaped by a transnational epistemic community of social reformers who sought to promote international trade and peace through a reinterpretation of liberal thinking. The study integrates a bottom-up approach while analyzing the leadership groups that fostered international connections. From this perspective, the research posits that the 1848 European revolutions, rather than the Rochdale Pioneers of 1844, marked the key turning point in the development of the co-operative movement, while reassessing France's significant role in paving the way for the foundation of the International Co-operative Alliance. Furthermore, it explores how co-operative internationalism evolved in contrast to socialist internationalism from the 1860s, with the two movements only converging in the early 20th century.

**Samuel Boscarello is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Contemporary History at Sapienza University of Rome. He earned his PhD in 2024 from the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, with a dissertation on the history of co-operative internationalism in the 19th century. He collaborates with the European University Institute and published in Italian and international academic journals.**

### **Professor Patrizia Battilani: Cooperatives and the gender issue: the Italian case study**

For a long time the history of cooperative enterprises was prevalently a male concern. Before the first world war, restraints to women membership came directly from the cooperative bylaws. For instance, many rural cooperatives, especially the Raiffeisen banks, granted the membership only to the head of the family, which according to the Italian legislation was the husband or the father. Only widows could join such cooperatives.

Also cooperatives with a more open membership policy, never allowed women to take the lead.

The situation changed only after the second world war, and especially during the Seventies, when a new generation of cooperatives focusing in the provision of services were set up. Many of them counted many women among their member and also had women as director or president.

The Seventies were a turning point in the history of Italian feminism with the emergence of a new legislation equalizing the women position within the family and in the job market, at least from a legal point of view.

This change influenced also cooperative enterprises with the emergence of a new generation of "funding mother" and head of cooperatives.

This paper aims at investigating the role of women in Italian cooperative enterprises from the seventies onward, by focusing on undertakings funded by women. We will analyse 5 cooperatives operating in different sectors to analyse the evolution of the women leadership and membership from the Seventies to the turn of the 21 century.

**Patrizia Battilani is Professor of Economic History at the University of Bologna.**

### **Rafael Ziegler & Julie Rijpens Circular economy policies, cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy**

There is an emergence of new cooperatives adding circularity as foundational values and principles from inception, while established coops have partly implicitly endorsed circularity principles (such as the sharing of resources and tools) or explore options to increase circularity strategies into their approaches. However, current economies remain strongly

“linear”, i.e. based on the extraction of non-renewable resources and with insufficient circularity rates required in support of major sustainability goals.

Regional, national and municipal policies have an important role in recognizing cooperatives and social and solidarity economy (SSE) organizations and supporting their roles as actors for socially just and sustainable transitions. A growing number of policy initiatives supports either the circular or the social economy, and increasingly the combination of both, which is promising but still not enough. Based on a survey of 12 European and American countries, we review their current circular economy and/or social economy policy instrument mix, policy recognition of SSE organizations, and draw a conclusion for the political embedding of a socially just and ecologically sustainable transitions.

**Julie Rijpens is Assistant Professor in social economy and innovation at École des sciences de la gestion, Université du Québec à Montréal. Her research interests include social economy governance and business models, the social economy’s contribution to circular economy, and the role of research-arts alliances to foster transformative social innovation.**

**Rafael Ziegler is a professor at HEC Montréal and Director of the *Institut international des coopératives Alphonse-et-Dorimène-Desjardins (IICADD)*. Rafael is interested in innovations and ideas contributing to transformations towards sustainability. He is associate editor of the *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* and the *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, and member of the Réseau québécois de recherche en économie circulaire (Québécois Network for Research in Circular Economy – RQREC).**

### **E. G. Nadeau: Proposal for the Establishment of an International Cooperative Development Fund**

I would like to present a recommendation at the State of Co-operation Conference for the establishment of an International Cooperative Development Fund (ICDF) during IYC25.

The presentation would cite several key steps in forming, and components of, such a Fund, potentially including:

- A resolution by the board of the International Cooperative Alliance to form an ICDF task force
- A balance of Global South and Global North representatives on the task force
- Financing from co-ops and co-op members, including both donations and loan-related financial instruments
- Allowance for earmarking of financial support to specific co-op sectors, sustainable development goals, regions and countries (although I would prefer a minimum specified proportion going to countries in the Global South)
- For participating co-ops, a recommended amount of financing equal to 3% of net profits

The presentation would also provide examples of existing co-op development funds.

**E.G. Nadeau has a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin. He has researched, developed, taught, and written about co-operatives for over 50 years. He founded [Cooperative Development Services](#) in 1985. He has authored or co-authored five books on cooperatives and cooperation. He organized [The Cooperative Society Project](#) in 2015.**

### **Dr Jason Spicer: Co-operative Enterprise in Comparative Perspective: Exceptionally Un-American?**

Why are co-operatives comparatively so rare, especially at scale, in the USA? In this comparative-historical analysis, contrasting the USA to Finland, France, and New Zealand, the presenter argues that the USA's co-operative development has been constrained by the joint effects of economic liberalism and structural racism over time; the argument is more fully presented in the author's new Oxford University Press book of the same title.

**Bio: Jason Spicer is Assistant Professor at the City University of New York, where he is jointly appointed at the Marx School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College and the Social Welfare PhD Program at the Graduate Center. Previously on the faculty of the University of Toronto, he holds a PhD in Political Economy from MIT.**