

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20019]

Proposed title of the session

Cooperative networks in regional and national perspective during the 19th and 20th century

Abstract

Cooperatives and associations based on mutual aid – regardless of the ideological overload they sometimes have been attributed – have for one and a half century been an economic institution, which to a considerable extent contributed to the adaptation of broad masses of small producers and consumers to the market. Coops (in contrast to the associations of businessmen) provide strategies for the adaptation to the capitalist model and are an option for these groups to increase their competitiveness; they shape the response of the individual agrarian producers to the stimuli presented by the international markets.

The topic needs to be approached from multiple perspectives – national, regional, local –, because each of these levels has its peculiarities and provides answers to different questions. For example, it is not possible to learn about the extent of the economic policies of governments, but with case studies of single cooperatives. We encourage studies that provide information on the real impact of the associative, mutual and also consortial forms of the cooperatives in the context where they unfold their activity and pursue their ultimate goal: increasing the benefits of the members and achieving a balance of income among them. So, the success or failure of coops in raising the wealth of its members can only be estimated by looking at the local level and the individual coops, communities and members. On the regional and the national level, however, the network aspect and market integration are important, and all levels are somehow affected by the distribution of knowledge, the adaptation of models and procedures, etc.

It is impossible to know the structure of cooperatives and the cooperative systems, if we don't regard the role played by the State. The impact of institutional rules on the cooperatives, both from the point of view of economic governance and democratic norms, is a common variable both under democratic governments as well as under dictatorships. The degree of state interference will determine the health of cooperatives. We are interested if excessive supervision resulted in weak and inefficient cooperatives and damaged their ability to compete in a globalizing world.

The main objective of the panel is to assess the impact of cooperativism on the increase or reduction of the standards of living of coop-members. To this end, it is set to encourage studies of national, regional and local scope which will help to understand the evolution of associative forms in different places in the world. Our sample will cover Europe, China, Russia, India, Japan and Latin America).

Above that we intend to advance the analysis of cooperatives and related social networks from the following perspectives:

- Economic performance and diversity of cooperative types;
- Causes of weaknesses, failures and successes of cooperatives;
- Improvements in the distribution of wealth through cooperative activities;
- Different typologies of associations and partnerships;
- The impact of modernization in management and technological innovation;
- Social capital to account for successful collective action and economic diversity;
- Comparison of the models: transfer or adaptation, importance of migration and its social networks;
- Institutional role of cooperatives;
- Networking and mapping of cooperative networks;
- Massive concentration as a factor of cooperative dynamics;
- Social economy, communalism and economic solidarity;
- Gender and cooperatives.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Dr. Torsten Lorenz (Charles University Prague [Czech Republic])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Candido Roman-Cervantes (University of La Laguna, Dpto. Business Administration and Economic History [Spain])
3. Dr. Catherine Bregianni (Academy of Athens, Research Centre for the Study of Modern Greek History [Greece])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. Graciela Mateo (University of Quimes [Argentina])
2. Jun Zhao (The World Bank [China])
3. Nobuko Kanaya (Hiroshima City University [Japan])
4. Daniel Salvetti (Mackenzie University in Sao Paulo [Brazil])
5. Žarko Lazarević (Institute of Contemporary History [Slovenia])
6. Uwe Müller (Centre for the History and Culture of East Central Europe [Germany])
7. John Wilson (Newcastle University, Business School [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
8. No input.
9. No input.
10. No input.
11. No input.
12. No input.
13. No input.