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Working paper

The latest crisis related to financial capitalism and mutations of the welfare state has been generating a new dynamic in the social economy of many advanced capitalist countries. Many politicians, institutions and movements are mobilising social economy (also called voluntary sector, third sector, etc.) as a solution to the current crisis. This is especially the case for cooperatives, which are now being promoted as an alternative to the drifts of financial capitalism. For example, on 1 July 2016, the occasion of the International Day of Cooperatives, ILO Director-General Guy Ryder issued a statement entitled "*Cooperatives: An old idea, but more relevant than ever in today's world*[1]". The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), which has existed since 1895, defined a cooperative as "*an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise*", and based on the values of "*self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity*" [ICA, 1995]. Around the world, the cooperative movement has regrouped different types of organisations that have been experimented with in relation to many human activities, including consumer, worker, agricultural and housing cooperatives. The cooperative movement is a historic component of the social economy that remains very dynamic, and the emergence and the relatively old institutionalisation of specific actors, principles and rules to the cooperative have significantly influenced other forms of organisations in the social economy as association, mutual insurance [Vienney, 1994] or today's non-governmental organizations and social enterprises.

The first cooperative developments emerged in Western Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century in response to contradictions between the democratic and industrial revolutions. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the working classes experienced new forms of collective organisations as cooperatives in order to improve their working and living conditions – the "Commerce Véridique et Social", founded in Lyon in 1835, or the "Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers" founded in the Manchester area in 1844, are emblematic examples of this period – and some social reformers as Robert Owen in England and Charles Fourier in France promoted a new organisation of society and relationship based on association and cooperation. In his study on "the social question", the sociologist Robert Castel remarks that "*the association carries another conception of the social, whose achievement passes through the formation of collectives establishing relationships of interdependence among equal individuals*[2]" [Castel, 1995, p. 423]. During the nineteenth century, the cooperative movement saw a rapid economic development while being subjected to institutional and legal recognition in various countries, and the cooperatives became one of the largest social movements along with trade unionism and political socialism. During the first half of the twentieth century, the cooperative movement and specifically consumer cooperation were organised by wholesaling and retailing networks in many urban centres and rural areas and within the International Co-operative Alliance. The cooperative movement has actively participated in the democratisation of consumption and the improvement of daily life; it was in the centre of the political and cultural emancipations of the working classes and feminist movements, and it was a space for reflection and commitment for intellectuals in various parts of the world [Furlough and Strikwerda, 1999; Toucas, 2005, Draperi, 2012]. Since its origins, and depending on the sociocultural contexts, the cooperative movement has been in tension among various practices and ideologies. In France during the nineteenth century, there were different traditions within the cooperative movement, such as liberalism, socialism, solidarism, Catholicism and paternalism [Gueslin, 1998; Ferraton, 2007; Fretel, 2008]. The interwar period was a golden age for the French cooperative

[1] http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_495232/lang--en/index.htm

[2] Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. « *L'association porte une autre conception du social, dont la réalisation passe par la constitution de collectifs instituant des rapports d'interdépendances entre individus égaux* » [Castel, 1995, p. 423].

movement – a period largely unrecognized even today – but it was also a period of profound changes for French society and the forms of capitalism and state that prevailed during "the long nineteenth century" from the French Revolution to World War I (to use the formulation of the British Historian Eric Hobsbawm). The political and socioeconomic evolutions during the interwar period shook the ideological traditions in which the cooperative movement had evolved, and during the Great Depression the institutions of liberal capitalism and ideas of classical liberalism became unstable and partly rejected. If Keynesianism and Fascism "*served as the ideological basis of the of the postwar "embedded liberal" order*" [Blyth, 2002, p. 5], some other "neo" ideologies figured prominently in the debate and the institutional reconfiguration in France, such as neo-liberalism, neo-socialism and neo-corporatism [Pirou, 1939; Audier, 2012], and neo-cooperation [Furlough, 1991]. Economic ideas play a crucial role in the construction and transformation of institutional orders, especially during moments of economic uncertainty, and in constructing institutional solutions to the crises [Blyth, 2002]. The cooperative ideology(ies) have also contributed to these institutional dynamics, particularly during the unstable interwar period. This working paper explores the evolution of French cooperative ideologies; it focuses specifically on the neo-liberal papers on cooperatives written by Bernard Lavergne and Hyacinthe Dubreuil, and on the socialist papers on cooperatives by George Fauquet and Marcel Mauss.

The first part of this article identifies some contextual elements concerning the evolution of the French cooperative movement – especially consumer cooperatives – during the economic boom of the 1920s and the crisis of the 1930s. It also presents general remarks on the evolution of economic ideas and institutions during this period. The second part focuses on analysing two cooperative propositions that fall within the emergence of neo-liberalism in France in the 1930s: the cooperative Order of Bernard Lavergne, the purpose of which was to empower consumers by liberalising both the market and the welfare state; and the cooperative organisation of work proposed by Hyacinthe Dubreuil, which aims to liberalise workers of modern corporations. The third part focuses on the role of cooperatives in the "Keynesian turn" of French socialism by exploring papers by two cooperative thinkers: George Fauquet, who promotes using the cooperative sector to integrate different kinds of cooperatives inside a mixed economy system; and Marcel Mauss, who believes cooperatives are a good way to enhance the empowerment of consumers and citizens with a view to nationalising the economy.

1 The metamorphosis of the French cooperative movement during the interwar period: Contextual perspectives

The first cooperative experiences in Europe emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the consumer cooperation became ideologically and institutionally predominant in the French cooperative movement, even through consumer cooperation was divided between many networks and political groups. The rivalry between the two national consumer cooperative organisations, namely the Union Coopérative (which defended a "third way" between liberalism and socialism) and the Bourse des Coopératives Socialistes (which considered consumer cooperation to be the "third pillar of socialism") that lasted from the 1890s to 1912 is particularly representative of the divisions in the cooperative movement at the turn of the century [Furlough, 1991]. The unification of consumer cooperative networks into a Fédération Nationale des Coopératives de Consommation (FNCC) on the eve of the First World War and the role of cooperators during that conflict gave new impetus to trade relations and political support for cooperatives during the interwar period – a period which represents the "golden age" of the French cooperative movement [Toucas, 2005]. To understand the development of the cooperative movement in the context of the interwar period, we can distinguish two precise moments: the expansion of cooperatives in the economic boom of the 1920s (1.1) and the weakening of cooperatives after the 1930s crisis (1.2).

1.1 The French cooperative movement during the "Crazy Years"

The First World War had dramatic demographic, socio-economic and political consequences; in the years following it, the French economy saw a period of dynamic growth (around 6% per year). This economic growth was fuelled by the development of new industrial activities (in relation inter alia to electricity, chemistry and the automotive sector) and strong growth in productivity, as well as by the improvements in living and working conditions that accompanied the development of the welfare state [Beaud, 2010]. The French regulation school suggests that the interwar period was characterised by an intensive mode of regulation (significant productivity gains) without mass consumption but with liberal wage labour regulation. The contradictions of this "hybrid" mode of regulation were the origin of the 1929 crisis, but it already showed its first signs of failure in the 1920s [Boyer; 2015]. These economic contradictions can also partially explain the development of consumer cooperatives during the interwar period as a way to deal with the macroeconomic imbalance between production and consumption. From a political point of view, the National Bloc first took first power after the war, while socialists, communists and trades unionists were divided until the Lefts Cartel between radicals and socialists came to power in 1924. The right returned to power in 1926, but the uncertainties of political change weakened the foundations of the Third Republic; some historians speak about a French crisis of the "republican mystic" during the 1920s [Milza and Berstein, 1994].

In addition to the economic boom and the emergence of a consumer society [Furlough, 1991], the cooperative movement also benefitted from the state's help after the role of cooperatives was recognised during the war. In addition to providing food, clothing, education and agriculture support, cooperatives also offered a space of solidarity and politicisation. Their importance in the everyday lives of the working class helped consumer cooperatives grow from 876,000 members in 1914 to 2.3 million members in 1922 [Toucas, 2005]. The cooperative movement came also closer to the Socialist and Communist Parties as well as to trade unions. However, for Charles Gide[3] and his conception of a republic cooperative of consumers, it was mainly a period of intellectual consecration in the French and international cooperative movements [Draperi, 2012]. At the end of the 1920s, some cooperative leaders and theorists expressed a desire to accelerate the second phase of the republic cooperative's development – namely the abolition of wage labour – and proposed merging worker and consumer cooperatives into one movement. However, the crisis of the 1930s ended this cooperative dynamic and the hope for a republic cooperative [Toucas, 2005].

1.2 The French cooperative movement during the Great Depression

Different interpretations of the economic crisis that followed 1929 are still being proposed today [Hautcoeur, 2009], but in this article we follow the French regulation school's interpretation. This interpretation considers that the 1929 crisis was a crisis in the mode of accumulation, which was characterised by mass production without mass consumption; the fragility of this institutional configuration was succeeded by the new accumulation regime of Fordism (i.e. mass production with mass consumption) and Keynesianism regulation following the Second World War. However, the economic crisis quickly became a political crisis that entailed international events and the parliamentary democracy in France being called into question with the rise of fascism and many political scandals. The victory of the Popular Front – an alliance of left-wing movements – during May 1936 legislative elections and the introduction of social reforms created both an important social movement and new

[3] From 1889 until his death in 1932, Charles Gide develop a program of integral cooperativisation of the economy – the Cooperative Republic – based on primacy of the consumer, which pass by three principle steps : firstly cooperativisation of trade, secondly cooperativisation of industrial production and a third phase to cooperativise agriculture. See an English translation in Charles Gide, 1921, *Consumers' Co-Operative Societies*, Manchester, Cooperative Union Limited.

perspectives for workers. However, effects of the Great Depression, international conflicts, the European crisis and many divisions in the Popular Front weakened the party and led to its break up in 1938 [Milza et Berstein, 1994]. The economic and political transformations during the interwar period led to an ideological reconfiguration of French capitalism around three main ideologies: neo-liberalism, neo-corporatism and neo-socialism [Pirou, 1939]. Neo-liberals recognise a positive role for the state in the economy in terms of implementing unfettered competition and reducing inequalities; neo-corporatists propose enforcing the influence of corporations and professionals in organising the state and economy to fight liberalism excesses; and finally, neo-socialists reject integral collectivism and instead promote a mixed economy with planning and nationalization projects.

The 1930s crisis marked a return to divisions within the cooperative movement. These divisions were accentuated by management excesses that questioned the global project of cooperation, and economic depression and reductions in the state also directly impacted cooperatives – more specifically, producer cooperatives. The improvement of living conditions for workers and rural populations that accompanied the institutionalization of the welfare state weakened the ideal of the republic cooperative. The death of Charles Gide in 1932 deprived the movement of its major theorist in France, and the 1935 publication of George Fauquet's *Secteur coopératif* represented a symbolic turn for many cooperators who now left their utopia of a republic cooperative behind.[4] The reformist and pragmatic turn of the French cooperative movement is particularly evident in the FNCC, which promoted "neocooperative" values and practiced less radical. Historian Ellen Furlough summed up the trajectory of consumer cooperation in France during the interwar period as follows: "*By the early 1920s, consumer cooperation seemed to be in a strong position. The FNCC sought vigorously to extend and strengthen the movement, and the new cooperatives founded after the war were flourishing. Yet the growth was accompanied by a transformation of both ideology and practice as neocooperation became the overarching framework. By the end of the 1920s, the elements that had distinguished cooperative from capitalist commerce were minimal. Cooperation had become a commercial sector within the largest capitalist economy; it mirrored many capitalist practices and assumption while retaining a few distinctively cooperative aspects*" [Furlough, 1991, p. 259].

Box 1: The evolution of two consumer cooperative in the North of France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – L' "Union" de Lille and Amiens
(Current research and the box is being drafted)

On the eve of the Second World War, cooperation remained one of the largest social movements in France despite the impact of the economic crisis. However, the interwar period represents a moment of profound ideological change in the French cooperative movement that we now consider through the writings of four cooperative thinkers of the 1920s and 1930s, namely Bernard Lavergne, Hyacinthe Dubreuil, George Fauquet and Marcel Mauss.

2 The role of cooperatives in the emergence of French neo-liberalism: Bernard Lavergne and Hyacinthe Dubreuil

During the nineteenth century, cooperatives were a subject of discussion for few French liberal economists [Ferraton, 2007], but the evolution of liberalism ideology during the interwar period led to

[4] The project of Republic cooperative disappeared in northern countries after the Second World War, but it reappeared during the 1960s with independence struggles in third world countries, as Guyana which achieved independence from the United Kingdom on 1966 and became officially the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on 1970 [Draperi, 2012, p. 232-252].

new reflection on this subject. Around the 1930s, some French neo-liberals promoted the idea that the state could foster the development of consumer and worker cooperatives in order to organise the free-market economy [Pirou, 1939, p. 42]. The cooperative writings of Bernard Lavergne (2.1) and Hyacinthe Dubreuil (2.2) are quite illustrative of the ambiguous relationship between the cooperative movement and French neo-liberalism.

2.1 The cooperative Order of Bernard Lavergne: The liberalisation of market and state by the consumers

Bernard Lavergne (1884-1975) was an economist who theorized about and helped to develop the French consumer cooperatives movement. In particular, he and his professor Charles Gide together created *La Revue des études coopératives*[5] in 1921. He also contributed to the diffusion of neo-liberal ideas in France and was one of the organisers of the 1938 Walter Lippman Colloquium in Paris [Audier, 2012; Denord, 2007].

Being critical of classical liberalism's limitations vis-à-vis explaining the evolution of capitalism and the emergence of the welfare state during the interwar period led Lavergne to proposing from marginalism theory a new theory of "*consumer supremacy*" to develop a neo-liberal organisation of the welfare state and the market capitalism: the cooperative Order [Lavergne, 1926; 1936]. He does not see the principle of free competition as being opposed to social justice, as "*in the economic sense of the word, justice is a concept that is by definition amoral. It is simply the expression of the mechanic law of supply and demand*"[6] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 61]. Social and economic inequalities are justified by the principle of "*social opportunity*", which reflects the "*great inequality that exists between the talents and aptitudes of people*"[7] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 584]. However, the concentration of capitalism and the oligopolies and cartels that existed during the interwar period question the liberalism principles, as when "*the producers are not in competition, the capitalist regime becomes totally defective, not to say intolerable. Capitalism is based on a premise of competition*"[8] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 45]. Lavergne's objective is to resolve the capitalist and democratic crisis by promoting the primacy of consumers on the market – which respects the "law of supply and demand" – and the state, while simultaneously ensuring social justice considerations. Indeed, it is also in terms of "*consumers born from state services*" that citizens have "*the right to also compete in the formation of general will and control of state machinery*"[9] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 16]. However, to re-establish the prevalence of general interest in response to universal and equal suffrage, we need to create a complementary social suffrage in order to represent elites seeing as "*the will and the competence of all elites, of all bodies that the culture and selflessness render them suitable to discern and wish the general good*"[10] [Lavergne, 1936, p. 61].

This double reform of the market and the state proposed by Lavergne is based on the emergence of a cooperative Order. He proposes giving the cooperative movement an autonomous doctrine of both socialism and liberalism that is also based on the latest scientific principles of marginalism theory. If we

[5] The *Revue des études coopératives* became on 1986 *Revue des études coopératives, mutualistes et associatives*, and then *Revue internationale de l'économie sociale* (http://recma.org/)

[6] Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. « *Au sens économique du mot, la justice est un concept par définition même, amoral. Elle est simplement l'expression de la loi mécanique de l'offre et de la demande* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 61].

[7] « *L'inégalité formidable qui existe entre les talents et les aptitudes des hommes* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 584]

[8]: « *Du jour où les producteurs ne sont plus en compétition, le régime capitaliste devient tout à fait défectueux, pour ne pas dire intolérable. Le capitalisme est basé sur le postulat de la concurrence* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 45].

[9] C'est au titre de « *consommateurs nés des services de l'État* » que les citoyens ont « *le droit de concourir également à la formation de la volonté générale et au contrôle des rouages de l'État* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 16].

[10] « *La volonté et la compétence de toutes les élites, de tous les corps que leur culture et leur désintéressement rendent aptes à discerner et à vouloir le bien général*. » [Lavergne, 1936, p. 61].

follow this theory, it is logical "*to apply industrial management to consumer cooperatives […] if it is clear that public demand is the essential component of a product's value*"[11] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 37]. It is also necessary "*to give at the entrepreneur any initiative"* and *"to dismiss any regime where economic management is exercised by authority, by obedience on direct orders from political power*"[12] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 37-38]. For Lavergne, the marginalism theory thus leads to a profound reformulation of the "*cooperative trinity of formulae*" that was formed around the abolition of profit, wage-labour and social classes. Firstly, cooperatives do not have to aim for the abolition of profit – indeed, making profits is the goal for any enterprise – but should instead pursue a reasonable profit without transforming the efficiency of the capitalism production system. Secondly, we cannot abolish wage-labour given that modern technology creates "*a necessary separation between a savers' community that, by mutual efforts, establishes enterprise, and a community of workers and engineers that puts assembled tools into service*"[13] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 68]; the cooperative Order can only improve employees' working conditions. Thirdly, social classes persist in the cooperative Order, but the "*less unequal distribution*" of wealth helps to "*attenuate the class struggle which corrodes our modern societies*"[14] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 53]. Finally, the cooperative Order "*is not something other than a powerful and methodical effort to introduce the greatest justice possible in economic relations, while accepting as given the individual selfishness and fundamental instincts of men, brief, while respecting the law of economic value which is essentially amoral*"[15] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 70].

Lavergne estimates that the cooperative Order will be realised by a double movement that arises from both the bottom of consumer cooperatives (and "*emerges spontaneously from the soil*") and the top of government cooperatives (which results from a state's willingness, bearing in mind that government cooperatives are similar to consumer cooperatives but instead have members that are legal entities, such as states, townships and local authorities). Lavergne's most important influence in the French cooperative movement was promoting a new kind of "government cooperative" – or "régie coopérative" in French – in order to associate *"in the democratic distribution of profit – the only result of the state management – the fecundity on the free initiative and responsibility of private industries*"[16] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 485]. Lavergne observes that if consumer cooperatives have slightly developed in recent decades, the state will be unable to control the economy: "*public authorities cannot be good industrialists or good merchants*"[17] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 485]. By balancing the economic efficiency of liberalism with the social justice of cooperative principles, "*The cooperative Order permits socialisation without state control. It authorises an indefinite socialisation of economic enterprises without compromising either public liberties or private liberties. […]. It is the only social principle which*

[11] « *Remettre la gestion industrielle aux coopératives de consommateurs […] s'il est exact que la demande du public est l'élément essentiel de la valeur des produits* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 37].
[12] « *Laisser au chef de l'entreprise toute initiative, par conséquent l'obligation logique où l'on se trouve d'écarter tout régime où la gestion économique est exercée par voie d'autorité, par obéissance aux ordres directs du pouvoir politique* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 37-38].
[13] « Une séparation nécessaire entre la collectivité des épargnants qui, de leurs efforts associés, fondent l'entreprise, et la collectivité des salariés et ingénieurs qui mettent en services l'outillage assemblé » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 68].
[14] *« D'atténuer la lutte des classes qui ronge nos sociétés modernes* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 53].
[15] L'Ordre coopératif « *n'est autre chose qu'un effort puissant et méthodique pour introduire la plus grande justice possible dans les relations économiques, tout en acceptant comme donné l'égoïsme individuel et les instants fondamentaux de l'homme, bref, tout en respectant la loi de la valeur économique qui, par essence, est amorale*» [Lavergne, 1926, p. 70].
[16] « *A la répartition démocratique du profit – seul fruit de la gestion d'État – la fécondité de la libre initiative et de la responsabilité de l'industrie privée* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 485].
[17] « *Les pouvoirs publics ne sauraient être bon industriel, ni bon commerçant* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 518]

manages to come out of the conflict of individual selfishness and human mediocrity, a just and liberal order"[18] [Lavergne, 1926, p. 47].

2.2 The cooperative organisation work of Hyacinthe Dubreuil: The liberalisation of labour and workers in the modern corporation

Despite publishing some best sellers,[19] Hyacinthe Dubreuil (1884-1975) is little known in the French cooperative movement. He started his career as a worker and trade unionist and later became a top official at the International Labour Office (ILO); he also influenced the emergence of management science in France. Close to neo-liberal and neo-corporatist reformers during interwar period, Dubreuil tried his entire life to promote a new way of organising work in modern firms based on cooperative principles [Ribeill, 2003].

Dubreuil's personal history as a former worker led him to propose scientifically studying the discouragement of the working class in order to promote a "*rational use of the human factor*"[20] [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 15]. He suggested different causes for workers' discouragement (e.g., recruitment and redundancy, work organisation and conflicts, and low incomes) but was critical of the conventional wisdom concerning worker morale, seeing as "*in the best interests of social production, it may be necessary to understand that labour will not show prodigies what it is capable either by narrow rules or by stupefying slavery of a robot discipline*[21] [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 70]. If the workers' claims pass by their liberty within the organisation of the company, none of the socialist proposals (such as the abolition of private property, the conquest of state power and critiques against mechanization) represent solutions for the labour crisis in modern capitalism. Worker cooperatives are also not a solution, as "*a same vice should hurt them if the worker can't find on worker cooperatives that the same mediocre and passive life, and this vice should be the cause of the relative stagnation of this kind of enterprise, which however already contains a partial application of cooperative principles. This internal obstacle follows, in my view, a false and arbitrary conception of equality*"[22] [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 221]. Nevertheless, Dubreuil considers that "*if we exclude worker cooperatives, we will not reject the cooperative principle. We will look instead to develop them, but in another form*"[23] [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 151]. Examples of cooperatives

[18] «*L'ordre coopératif permet la socialisation sans étatisation, il autorise une socialisation indéfinie des entreprises économiques sans compromettre ni libertés publiques ni libertés privées. […] Il est le seul principe social qui réussisse à faire sortir du conflit des égoïsmes individuels et de la médiocrité humaine un ordre juste et libéral* » [Lavergne, 1926, p. 47].

[19] Two of his books were published in English: Dubreuil, 1930, *Robots or men? A French workman's experience in American industry*, New-York, Harper & Brothers; and Dubreuil, 1939, *A chance for everybody, A liberal basis for the organization of work*, London, Chatto & Windus.

[20] « *Utilisation rationnelle du facteur humain* » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 199]

[21] « *Pour le plus grand intérêt de la production sociale, il faudra peut-être arriver à comprendre que jamais le Travail ne montrera les prodiges dont il est capable par le moyen de règles étroites, ni par l'esclavage abrutissant d'une discipline d'automates* » [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 70].

[22] « *Un même vice doit donc les frapper pour que l'ouvrier ne trouve dans les unes comme dans les autres que la même vie médiocre et « passive », et ce vice doit être la cause de la stagnation relative de ces entreprises, qui contiennent pourtant déjà une application partielle des principes coopératifs. Cet obstacle intérieur résulte, à mon sens, d'une conception fausse et arbitraire de l'égalité* » [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 221].

[23] « *Si nous écartons la coopérative de production, nous ne repousserons pas le principe coopératif. Nous chercherons au contraire à le développer, mais sous une autre forme* » (1923, p. 151).

such as the Familistère[24] show us that it is possible to liberate the workers in an industrial firm and thus "*to also impart an entrepreneurial spirit in a worker*"[25] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 90].

As response to the labour crisis during the interwar period, Dubreuil proposes a new organisation of work based on cooperatives principles. His aim is to reconcile the self-interest of workers and capitalists with the collective interest of the enterprise, and thus "*to realise labour productivity at the same time as peace among these various actors*" [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 120]. The main issue is to know "*by what practical arrangements labour could be organised for workers in order to bring their conditions to the same level as their employers?"*[26] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 70]. The solution is to develop "*the association virtue within labour, in order to obtain this art of liberty and responsibility*"[27] which characterizes the entrepreneurial spirit [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 18]. Dubreuil proposes a new organization of companies basing on *"every technically isolated subdivisions*" would take the form of a working teams with a technical and budgetary autonomy. He offers the following elaboration: "*The enterprise could be taken the aspect of juxtaposed cells, in which the sought-after equilibrium between the self-interest of each individual and the collective interest of enterprise could be established. All relations inside an enterprise, both among individuals and the group than the group and the enterprise, would tend to take the form of purely commercial relations, in which this notion of subordination, which is inexhaustible in the supply of conflicts, would disappear*"[28] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 115]. These autonomous unities of production could take the form of "*cooperatives without capital*". At the beginning of more productivity and social peace, the "*advantage of this system increases even further in cooperative organisations where everyone is prompted to a proportional interest in his situation, to ensure performance excellence: at first in his personal ardour, then in the judicious choice of the best chief*"[29] [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 75]. Indeed, the cooperative teams will be based on a "*natural inequality determined by only the difference of capacities*"[30] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 220]. This is in contrast to "*egalitarianism*", which weakens worker cooperatives. The cooperative organisation of labour can be implemented by a principle of "promotion" that consists of "*placing everyone at the starting line with equal opportunities as well as equal resources*"[31] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 224] in order to discover "*men endowed with chief capacities*"[32] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 236]. The cooperative organisation of labour inside the modern corporation allows workers to be liberated while productivity is increased for employers, but it is also a new kind of

[24] Built in the nineteenth century in Guise (Picardy), the Familistère (Social Palace) – also called l' « Association coopérative du Capital et du Travail » – was created by a French industrialist influenced by the fourierism, Jean-Baptiste André Godin, to improve the lives of the working class by proposing better housing (with a theatre, schools, a washroom, swimming pool, etc.) and a new organisation of work based on cooperative principles.

[25] « *Transporter aussi chez l'ouvrier l'esprit de l'entrepreneur* » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 90].

[26] « *Par quelles dispositions pratiques le travail pourrait-il être organisé pour qu'en face de lui les travailleurs se trouvent placés dans des conditions identiques à celle de leurs employeurs ?* » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 70].

[27] « *La vertu de l'association au sein même du travail, afin d'y obtenir cet art de liberté et de responsabilité* » [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 18].

[28] En prenant « *pour base d'une nouvelle organisation de l'entreprise toutes les subdivisions techniquement isolables* » auxquelles on accorderait « *une autonomie non seulement technique, mais encore en quelque sorte budgétaire […] L'entreprise pourrait prendre l'aspect d'une juxtaposition de cellules, dans lesquelles pourrait s'établir l'équilibre tant recherché entre l'intérêt personnel de chaque individu et l'intérêt collectif de l'entreprise. Toutes les relations intérieures de l'entreprise, tant entre l'individu et le groupe, qu'entre le groupe et l'entreprise, tendraient alors à prendre la forme de relations purement commerciales, dans lesquelles disparaitrait cette notion de subordination qui est intarissable source de conflits*. » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 115].

[29] « *L'avantage de ce système s'accroit encore dans l'organisation coopérative où chacun est incité par un intérêt proportionnel à sa situation, à veiller à l'excellence du rendement : dans son ardeur personnelle d'abord, dans le choix judicieux du meilleur chef ensuite* » [Dubreuil, 1923, p. 175].

[30] « *Inégalité naturelle, déterminée par la seule différence des capacités* » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 220].

[31] « *Placer chacun sur la ligne de départ avec des chances égales, sinon avec des moyens égaux* » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 224].

[32] « *A la découverte des hommes doués des capacités du chef* » [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 236].

corporate solidarity in that every autonomous team of workers assumes "*aspects of a real school of social life*"[33] [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 255].

After being viewed ambiguously by some neo-liberal and neo-corporatist reformers – especially during Vichy France (1940-1944) – Dubreuil's proposition to develop a cooperative organisation of labour was later taken up again in the 1970s by a French neoliberal think-thank (namely the "Hyacinthe Dubreuil Committee"[34] which was chaired by the influential neoliberal economist Jacques Rueff) as well as by self-management movements [Ribeill, 2003].

3 The role of cooperatives in the evolution of French socialism: George Fauquet and Marcel Mauss

The evolution of French society during the interwar period and the growing influence of Keynesian ideas during the 1930s has progressively called into question the ideal of the republic cooperative as a way to integrate a cooperative sector within the welfare state. Two theorists and promoters of the French cooperative movement during the first half of the twentieth century, namely George Fauquet (3.1) and Marcel Mauss (3.2), are important witnesses of the reconfiguration of the relationship between socialism and cooperative movements during the interwar period.

3.1 The cooperative sector in the "Mixed Economy" by George Fauquet

Initially trained as a medical doctor, Fauquet became a senior official in the ILO's cooperative department during the interwar period. His professional activities and activism in the socialist movement enabled him to get close to the cooperative movement to the point that he held important related responsibilities. His socio-economic approach to cooperatives played an important role during the second half of the twentieth century, especially within French cooperative research (e.g., the writings of Claude Vienney).

Like other cooperative theorists of this period, Fauquet remarked that "*ahead of the new forms of capitalism, ahead the increasing state power on economic life, the thinking on cooperatives cannot be attached to conceptions that arose during the last century*"[35] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 5]. The cooperators previously had a vision of an "*infinite development of cooperative institutions at the expense of the external environment which they had to absorb piece by piece, but which would stay until the total absorption an environment of free competition*"[36] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 11]. However, in the modern economy cooperatives "*can only aim to set up a sector*"[37] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 15]. Critical of "*theories that tended to draw up doctrinal barriers between the different forms of cooperation*"[38] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 18], Fauquet promoted a unitary approach to the cooperative sector that combined all kinds of

[33] « *L'aspect d'une véritable école de vie sociale »* [Dubreuil, 1935, p. 255].
[34] Comité Hyacinthe Dubreuil – comité d'action pour le développement des équipes autonomes d'entreprises
[35] « *En face des formes nouvelles du capitalisme, en face de l'emprise croissante de l'État sur la vie économique, la pensée coopérative ne peut rester attachée à des conceptions nées au cours du siècle dernier* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 5].
[36] « *Un développement indéfini des instituions coopératives aux dépens d'un milieu extérieur qu'elles devaient absorber fraction par fraction, mais qui resterait jusqu'à l'absorption complète, le milieu de la libre concurrence* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 11].
[37] Les coopératives « *peuvent seulement viser à en occuper un secteur* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 15].
[38] « *Les théories qui tendaient à dresser des barrières doctrinales entre les différentes formes de la Coopération* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 18].

cooperatives, but the question was then how "*to determine what place the cooperative sector intends to claim in an organized economy or in an organisation's process*"[39] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 12].

Fauquet distinguishes between the public sector, the capitalist sector, the private sector (which includes domestic, farmer and crafts economies) and the cooperative sector. In particular, the cooperative sector is composed of different "*forms of cooperation that are already linked or tend to be interlinked, both morally and economically*"[40] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 14]. This sector tends to merge with the private sector, but it struggles and competes with the capitalist sector. The aim of cooperative institutions is to reduce "*the breadth of the central zone occupied by the market and the capitalist economy*"[41] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 31]. This is done through a process of cooperatively integrating the initial and final economic phases, in which "*man cannot be reduced to the role of a simple element of an impersonal system*"[42] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 86]. The relationship between the cooperative and public sectors is more complicated, because "*an economy organized through a cooperative effort differs profoundly from the other realised and planned of organized economy*" as the public sector. Indeed, "*cooperative link is a federative link*"[43] which differs from links within the public sector [Fauquet, 1942, p. 45]. Furthermore, the public and cooperative sectors have common aspirations regarding "*the substitution of the notion of organized service to that of the struggle for profit and domination*"[44] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 48]. However, the public sector is not the only way to organise the economy, because the "*state is, necessarily and by nature, a coercive force: if it invaded the entire economic life, man would be submitted to the most appalling tyranny*"[45] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 50]. On the contrary, we must permit "*a meeting of two systems, and, at the same time, the meeting of two principles*".[46] This can be achieved through a flexible link between cooperatives and the state that creates "*a relay chain between the control centres of the economy and the depths of social life*"[47] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 50]. The cooperative sector has to find its own place in a mixed economy that is partly controlled by the state in order to widen "*the field of social life where man ensures, for the common good, the responsible use of his liberty*"[48] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 52]. When some commentators stressed that Fauquet had abandoned the utopia of the republic cooperative, however, he proposed also an alternative organisation of economic liberalism without falling into a collectivism system: "*the automatic responses ensured at least theoretically the equilibrium of a liberal economy: it is from the free play of elements grouped federally into the cooperative organisations that the command economy can expect the same regulating action*"[49] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 51].

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[39] « *Déterminer quelle place il [le secteur coopératif] entend revendiquer dans l'économie organisée ou en voie d'organisation* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 12].
[40] « *Les formes de la Coopération liée déjà ou tendant à se lier entre elles, moralement et économiquement* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 14].
[41] « *La largeur de la zone centrale occupée par l'économie marchande et capitaliste* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 31].
[42] « *L'homme ne peut être réduit au rôle de simple élément d'un système impersonnel* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 86].
[43] « *L'économie organisée par l'effort coopératif diffère profondément des autres formes réalisées ou projetées d'économie organisée » car « le lien coopératif est un lien fédératif* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 45].
[44] « *La substitution de la notion de service organisé à celle de la lutte pour le profit et la domination* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 48].
[45] « *L'État est, nécessairement et par nature, une force de contrainte : s'il envahissait toute la vie économique, l'homme serait soumis à la plus effroyable des tyrannies* » [Fauquet, 1942, p.50].
[46] « *Rencontre de deux systèmes, et, en même temps, rencontre de deux principes* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 50].
[47] « *Une chaine de relais entre les centres directeurs de l'économie et les profondeurs de la vie sociale* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 50].
[48] « *Le domaine de la vie sociale où l'homme conserve, pour le bien commun, l'usage responsable de sa liberté* » [Fauquet, 1942, p.52].
[49] « *Les réactions automatiques du marché assuraient au moins théoriquement, l'équilibre de l'économie libérale : c'est du libre jeu des éléments groupés fédérativement dans les organisations coopératives que l'économie dirigée peut espérer une même action régulatrice* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 51).

The theoretical contribution of Fauquet does not stop at the cooperative sector; he also develops a new analysis of cooperative organisations that is designed like an association of individuals who are pursuing their aim using a common enterprise. The cooperative institutions are composed of "*two elements jointly, one social and the other economic: an association of individuals who recognize on the one hand a similarity to some of their needs and on the other hand the possibility of better satisfying these needs through a common enterprise that by individual means; a common enterprise whose particular purpose responds precisely to the need to satisfy*"[50] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 19]. Within a cooperative, the notion of democracy arises from the social relations between association members and the notion of service arises from management relations between enterprise members, but "*if it fails in its moral task, a cooperative will fail in its economic task*"[51] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 25]. The strength of cooperatives is precisely to promote moral relations between individuals and the society by associating persons and economic relations through a common enterprise: "*the common action is both a condition and an ends to autonomy and independence for human individuals*"[52] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 41]. If capitalist developments "*have little by little detached economy from society and thus given birth to the dry realities that have served as a model for the abstractions of economists*"[53] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 44], within cooperative institutions individuals "*become aware of relations that unite them […]. As in all cooperation developments, they contribute to restoring the predominance of society in the economy*"[54] [Fauquet, 1942, p. 36]. Even if Fauquet provides prominence to economic and management in his new theorization of the cooperative sector and institutions, he never forgets the humanist ideals of cooperation that previously existed in the republic cooperative. For Fauquet, "*the first aim of cooperative institution is to improve the economic situation of its members; however, by the means that it uses, by the qualities that it both asks of its members and develops in them, it aims for and reaches the highest level. The goal of cooperation is then to make men who are responsible and in solidarity, who all rise to attain a full personal lives and together reach a full social life*"[55] [Fauquet, 1942, p.42].

3.2 The socialist cooperative in the nationalisation of Marcel Mauss

Marcel Mauss was a French sociologist and anthropologist who is particularly well known for his book *The Gift* (1925). He was also very committed to the socialist and cooperative movements during the first half of the twentieth century. Influenced by Jean Jaures and Charles Gide, in his scientific papers and articles in popular newspapers he developed an original conception of socialist cooperation that combined his sociologist and socialist positions [Dzimira, 2007].

For Mauss, cooperative action is part of broader socialist action that also includes trade unions and the Socialist Party – in other words, the "three pillars of socialism". He already in 1899 stressed that "*the trade union and socialist cooperative are the foundations of the future society […]. They constitute both*

[50] « *Deux éléments conjoints, l'un social et l'autre économique : une association de personnes qui ont reconnu et continuent de reconnaitre, d'une part la similitude de certains de leurs besoins et, d'autre part, la possibilité de mieux satisfaire ces besoins par une entreprise commune que par des moyens individuels ; une entreprise commune dont l'objet particulier répond précisément aux besoins de satisfaire ces besoins* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 19]

[51] « *Défaillante dans sa tâche morale, elle serait défaillante dans sa tâche économique* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 25],

[52] « *L'action en commun est tout à la fois comme condition et comme fin de l'autonomie et de l'indépendance de la personne* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 41].

[53] « *A peu à peu détaché l'économique du social et ainsi donné naissance aux sèches réalités qui ont servi de modèle aux abstractions des économistes* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 44]

[54] Les coopérateurs « *prennent conscience des liens qui les unissent […]. Elles contribuent comme tout développement de la coopération à rétablir la prédominance du social sur l'économique* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 36]

[55] « *La fin première de l'institution coopérative est de relever la situation économique de ses membres, mais par les moyens qu'elle met en œuvre, par les qualités qu'elles demandent à ses membres et qu'elle développe en eux, elle vise et atteint plus haut. Le but de la Coopération est alors de faire des hommes, des hommes responsables et solidaires, pour que chacun d'eux s'élève à une pleine vie personnelle, et, tous ensemble, à une pleine vie sociale* » [Fauquet, 1942, p. 44].

the force and resistance of socialism; they are its means of creation"[56] [Mauss, 1899]. In addition to the cooperative papers he wrote during the interwar period, Mauss also shared reflections on cooperation in his writings about *The Gift* (1924) and the bolshevism (1924). However, it is a work that Mauss drafted in the 1920s but was edited in 2013 that interests us in relation to understanding his cooperative conception, namely *The Nation* [2013]. The historical process of nationalising economic and political life in our modern societies is intimately linked to the emergence of democratic socialism, but the concentration of capitalism after the First World War led to an exacerbation of social inequalities; indeed, "*capitalism does not emerge declined, it comes out relatively augmented by the crisis; what was missing, it's it normal aspect; it is now monstrous and deranged*"[57] [Mauss, 2013, p. 322]. Some large capitalist and international corporations concentrate economic power among "*a group of relatively few great administrators, which contains many boards of directors and combines affairs with others affairs. There is already a concentration of powers, but these powers are not in the hands of the state*"[58] [Mauss, 2013, p. 329]. Like others authors, Mauss estimates that to integrate the cooperative movement within a socialist action adapted to the economic context of the 1920s, the cooperative movement should take the capitalism concentration into account in its strategy.

By socialism, Mauss means "*ideas, forces, groups which tend in a modern nation to create the entire economic life. This process occurs in a nationalisation way, that is, through the establishment of an industrial and commercial property under control of the nation, through the establishment a form of collective property appropriate to various communities which make up the nation and who are currently more or less deprived*"[59] [Mauss, 2013, p. 255]. The nationalisation process is based on a double "*political-economic*" movement that comes from the top through "*the growing awareness and the direction of economic services of the nation*"[60], such as monetary policies and labour legislation. However, it is also a movement arising from the bottom that is defined as "*mid-voluntary and mid-obligatory, mid-economic and mid-moral; it is supported by citizens arriving at the awareness of new interests and legal forms and then imposing them consciously and voluntarily on the state*"[61] [Mauss, 2013, p. 296]. Three institutions play important roles in the bottom-up movement: trade unions (in establishing a labour democracy), mutual insurances (in establishing a mutual democracy) and cooperatives (in establishing a consumer democracy). It is the popular and democratic rules which characterise the foundation of these institutions, and Mauss prefers to use the term democracy (as opposed to socialism) in order to exceed "*this eternal antinomic opposition of democracy and socialism that everyone opposes as if there were contradictory principles and as if it were not the same*

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[56] « *Le syndicat et la coopérative socialiste sont les fondements de la société future. […] Elles font la force et la résistance du socialisme ; elles sont ses moyens de création* » [Mauss, 1899].

[57] « *Le capitalisme ne sort pas diminué, il sort augmenté relativement de la crise ; ce qui a disparu, c'est son aspect normal ; il est monstrueux désormais et détraqué* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 322].

[58] « *Un groupe de grands administrateurs, relativement peu nombreux, figurant dans de nombreux conseils d'administration, abouchant les affaires les unes avec les autres. Il y a déjà concentration des pouvoirs, mais ces pouvoirs ne sont pas entre les mains de l'État* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 329].

[59] Mauss « *entend par socialisme, des idées, des forces, des groupes qui tendent dans une nation moderne à régler l'ensemble de la vie économique. Ce processus s'opère par voie de nationalisation, c'est-à-dire d'instauration de la propriété industrielle et commerciale sous le contrôle de la nation, par l'instauration d'une forme de propriété collective appropriée aux diverses collectivités dont se compose la nation et qui en sont actuellement plus ou moins privées* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 255].

[60] « *La prise de conscience et de direction des services économiques de la nation* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 296].

[61] « *Mi-volontaire et mi-obligatoire, mi-économique et mi-moral, il est le fait de citoyens arrivant à la conscience de nouveaux intérêts, de nouvelles formes juridiques et les imposant consciemment et volontairement à l'État* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 296]

emancipation movement of both the nation and the citizen"[62] [Mauss, 2013, p. 333]. However, Mauss remains critical of the worker, credit and agricultural cooperatives, as they are "*related to the actual regime rather than to the future regime of the society. In fact, they are above all associations of little capitalists within a capitalist legal form*"[63] [Mauss, 2013, p. 371]. Instead, he sees consumer cooperatives as having since their origin "*a huge revolutionary ambition. In fact, only rare mass movements have what is right and are what they promised to be. Consumer cooperation immediately thinks to reform the regime not only of consummation, but also of production and property*"[64] [Mauss, 2013, p. 373]. In a 1936 article in which Mauss discusses the conclusions of Fauquet's book (which he partially shares in the article), he nevertheless emphasises that it is consumer cooperation that "*seems to be the one which has the most displaced economic and legal axes, which constitutes the most collective (and not individual) reserves, and creates the most public services"*[65] [Mauss, 1936]. He concedes, however, that the cooperative movement has several limitations, such as a dependency on political changes, difficulties related to democratic and voluntary organisation, and risks of management and technical excesses at the expense of the cooperative ideal. Nonetheless, the French cooperative movement should follow the example of English cooperatives, which are veritable "*centres of social life*"[66] for workers, strikers and unemployed persons; indeed, English cooperatives "*succeeded to maintain the movement, its ideal and its force*".[67] However, "*if cooperation has its internal and external limits, there is at least a point at which its limits are far away: it is when cooperation leaves the commercial, industrial and financial world and enters into the moral world. It is why […] I stay a socialist and workerist cooperator*"[68] [Mauss, 1936].

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[62] « *Cette éternelle opposition antinomique de la démocratie et du socialisme, que les uns et les autres opposent comme s'il y avait des principes ici contradictoires, et s'il ne s'agissait pas du même mouvement d'émancipation, à la fois de la nation et du citoyen* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 333].

[63] « *Plutôt apparentées au régime actuel qu'au régime futur de la société. En fait, ce sont avant tout des associations de petits capitalistes sous une forme juridique capitaliste* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 371].

[64] « *Une immense ambition révolutionnaire. En fait, elle est un des rares mouvements des masses qui est bien ce qu'il avait promis d'être. Elle a tout de suite pensé à réformer le régime non seulement de la consommation, mais encore celui de la production et de la propriété* » [Mauss, 2013, p. 373].

[65] « *Parait être celle qui a le plus déplacé les axes économiques et juridiques, qui constitue le plus de réserves collectives et non individuelles, et rend le plus de services publics* » [Mauss, 1936].

[66] « *Centres de vie sociale* » [Mauss, 1936].

[67] « *Elles ont réussi à y maintenir le mouvement, son idéal et sa force* » [Mauss, 1936]

[68] « *Si la coopération a ses limites internes et externes, il y a du moins un point où ces limites sont très lointaines : c'est lorsqu'elle sort du monde commercial ou industriel ou financier et qu'elle entre dans le monde moral. C'est pourquoi […] je reste un coopérateur socialiste et ouvriériste* » [Mauss, 1936].

Conclusion

The cooperative movement is today one of the most important social movements in the world, and the recent crisis of financial capitalism has given a new impetus to many cooperative initiatives in various socioeconomic activities. Sometimes presented as an economic alternative to "(neo)liberalism" the 'market economy' or 'capitalism', the cooperatives are also considered a way to "modernise" the welfare state in the trend of the new public management and to promote a kind of "corporate social responsibility" and new "social entrepreneurship". A certain number of historical tensions still remain in cooperatives and social economy initiatives, for example between philanthropy and self-help, and we can find even today different ideological positions that are structured around liberalism, socialism, Catholicism, Protestantism, et cetera. These initiatives inherit from an ambiguous tradition and reinvent (often without knowing it) cooperative practices and ideologies from other times. More specifically, the interwar period can be seen as a veritable ideological and institutional laboratory of "the short twentieth century" (to use again the formulation of Eric Hobsbawm) until the last crisis of 2008. The ambiguity of the role played by the social economy and some cooperatives in the "neoliberal" policies that followed the 1980s in many advanced capitalist countries is not surprising if we remind ourselves of neoliberal thinkers' interest in the cooperative movement during the 1930s. The "government cooperative" proposed by Lavergne can be compared to the "public-private partnership" that is developing today; Lavergne's "cooperative Order" is sometimes close to the "social market economy" promoted by the European Union or the project of "Big society" by David Cameron. The new cooperative organisation of work promoted by Hyacinthe Dubreuil brings to mind *The New Spirit of Capitalism* published by Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski [1999, 2007], in which they illustrate how capitalism abandoned the hierarchical Fordist work organisation starting in the middle of the 1970s and developed a new network-based organization founded on employee initiative and relative work autonomy (but with more material and psychological insecurity for workers) – a new organization of work also called the neoliberal enterprise [Coutrot, 1998]. Conversely, some cooperatives and social economy initiatives, particularly in countries deeply affected by the crisis and by austerity policies, renew with practices and ideologies that had developed in the labour and socialist movement. The position of George Fauquet on a unified cooperative sector complementary to the public sector in order to control and reduce the capitalist sector was also a position shared by many socialist promoters of a unified social economy or third sector during the 1980s; today, economists such as Christophe Ramaux consider the social economy one of the pillars of the social state [Ramaux, 2010]. The considerations of Marcel Mauss about reciprocity, the cooperative movement and socialism are also found today more or less explicitly in solidarity economy theories and movements [Laville, 2003, 2010] and in "the commons" and its struggles [Dardot and Laval, 2014].

The historical investigation of the cooperative movement and the lessons that economists can draw from this research can help us not only understand the contemporary and future dynamics of social economy and cooperatives, but also, more broadly, present another perspective on the history and the current issues of capitalism dynamics. The cooperative movement has a long and rich history, especially in Western Europe – even if this history is largely unrecognised by economists and in the social sciences in general. Historians on both sides of the Channel acknowledge the same fact: cooperative history is underrepresented. The British historian Nicole Roberston notes that "*the co-operative movement deserves to occupy an important place in economic and social history. Compared to the attention given by historians to the Labour Party and trade unions, however, it is generally under-represented in labour history*" [Robertson, 2010, p. 4]. French historian Michel Dreyfus made a similar remark quite close: "*an essential component of the social economy, cooperation is, with mutuality, the oldest and the most powerful social movement in our country […]. However, and paradoxically, the history of cooperation, which had its moment of glory particularly during the 1920s […] was later abandoned for decades by*

historians of the social movement[69]" [Dreyfus, 2005, p. 13]. Concerning the interest of economists in the cooperative, the assessment is even more bitter. While the cooperative was the subject of important discussions among political economy during the nineteenth century (e.g. John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Léon Walras, Charles Gide, etc.) and during the first half of the twentieth century (the "*cooperative manifesto of French intellectuals and academics*" was initiated by personalities such as Albert Aftalion, Charles Gide, Elie Halévy, Marcel Mauss, Charles Rist, etc.), contemporary economists have largely abandoned discussions of cooperative economy, despite recent theoretical proposals from a Marxist and institutionalist perspective, and for many years it has been challenged by mainstream economists. Today, however, it is a major issue in the defence of pluralism in economics. In this regard, the conclusion of Albert Hirschman in *The Passions and the Interests*, remains a pressing issue today: "*I conclude that both critics and defenders of capitalism could improve upon the arguments through knowledge of the episode in intellectual history that has been recounted here. This is probably all one can ask of history, and of the history of ideas in particular: not to resolve the issues, but to raise the level of the debates*" [Hirschman, 1977, p. 135].

[69] "*Composante essentielle de l'économie sociale, la coopération est, avec la mutualité, le mouvement social le plus ancien et le plus puissant de notre pays. […] Pourtant, et de façon paradoxale, l'histoire de la coopération, qui a eu son heure de gloire, en particulier dans les décennies 1920 […] a été ensuite délaissée durant des décennies par les historiens du mouvement social* » [Dreyfus, 2005, p. 13].

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