An ILO Century of Cooperatives and Work

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Evolution in the interplay between concepts of work and of cooperative at the ILO

Context: history, theories and debates

Concepts are rooted in “networks of knowledge-based experts”, these are epistemic communities
“a mass movement... a movement of ideas... that moves towards the goals of fairness, order and worker emancipation... The ILO... had to exploit this treasure of practical experiences that the cooperative movement represents... almost all general problems of labour concerns cooperation or involves solutions that cooperation can provide. “

Discourse 1931 – Albert Thomas
Normative approach – soft power

- Peace Treaty of Versailles
- ILO Constitution article 12

Three historical moments selected

- 1919–1930s - decision by ILO Council of Administration
- Postwar to 1980s - ILO Recommendation for developing countries
- 1990s – 21st century - ILO Recommendation for the whole world
ILO Structure

Three constituencies at the ILO since mid-20th century

- governments
- employers’ representatives
- workers’ representatives

From 1919 to 1933

- Cooperatives were one of the three constituencies
- Had ILO staff equal or more than the other groups

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Last year 1933:
Cooperatives as one of the three ILO sections

Source: ILO organigram
Shared Missions

- Social justice and Peace
- Labour rights
- Work: experience and well-being
The future:

1) Cooperative work
2) Voices and dialogue
3) Epistemic community
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