

## 7.3 Co-operation and rural society, III. Unequal partners: national elites and localised peasantries in the co-operative movement Room 107

*Convener and chair: András Vári*

### 7.31 Jordi Planas – Rural co-operatives and empowerment of peasantry in agrarian collective action at the beginning of the twentieth century

At the beginning of the twentieth century landowners promoted some agrarian associations that tried to integrate peasants by offering co-operative services, as acquisition of agricultural inputs. Such associations were different from those that were set up by landlords before the agrarian depression in the late nineteenth century. Focusing the analysis on rural co-operatives that were created at the beginning of the twentieth century in the district of Igualada, a vine-growing region near Barcelona (Catalonia), this paper tries to explain the participation of landowners and peasantry in these associations, considering that the aims of both social groups taking part in the co-operatives were different. Besides, it tries to analyse the social implications of this participation in the rural co-operatives, such as the contribution of this new agricultural associationism to the integration of peasantry in the new market conditions and to the prevention of social conflicts in the rural society.

**Jordi Planas** is lecturer at the University of Barcelona (Department of Economic History and Institutions). His main research interests have been institutions and agricultural organisations in Catalonia and Spain, with special attention to co-operativism and associationism, and the evolution of large rural estates (nineteenth and twentieth centuries). His publications include: ‘Os proprietários e o associativismo agrário na Catalunha’, *Análise Social*, XLIV-3, 192 (2009), pp. 511-531; ‘El Instituto Agrícola Catalán de San Isidro y la organización de los intereses agrarios (1880-1936)’, *Revista Española de Estudios Agrosociales y Pesqueros*, 217 (2008), pp. 13-47; *Els propietaris i l'associacionisme agrari a Catalunya (1890-1936)*, Girona: Universitat de Girona – Documenta Universitaria (2006), 322 pp.; ‘Accounting Records of Large Rural Estates and the Dynamics of Agriculture in Catalonia (Spain), 1850-1950’, *Accounting Business & Financial History*, 15-2 (2005), pp. 171-185 (with Enric Saguer); ‘Co-operativismo y difusión del cambio técnico en la agricultura. La contribución de las cámaras agrícolas (Cataluña, 1890-1930)’, *Historia Agraria*, 30 (2003), pp. 87-117; ‘Sharecropping and the Management of Large Rural Estates in Catalonia, 1850-1950’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, XXVIII-3 (2001), pp. 89-108 (with Ramon Garrabou and Enric Saguer).

### 7.32 Gloria Sanz Lafuente – Peasants and co-operatives in Spain 1880–1930

The aim of the paper is to analyse the development of co-operatives in Spain from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s as a political and economical force. Agricultural co-operatives settled throughout Europe from about 1870. In Spain co-operatives developed varied according to regions, land tenure systems, the size of a farmer's property and crops. Especially after the provisions of the 1906 Agrarian Syndicates Act (*Ley de Sindicatos Agrícolas*), agrarian co-operatives were set up in Spain. First, co-operatives were studied as a force for agrarian modernisation, especially for technical change of the family farm. Second, co-operatives were analysed as a force of different trends of political conservatism in the Spanish rural society. The development of co-operatives acted in two different areas: the local rural area and in urban regional area where the federation of co-operatives were located. Both acted not only with an economical activity – credit, saving, co-operative purchase of fertilisers and inputs – but as a lobby in favour of agricultural interest. Fertiliser and credit were the most important activities of the Spanish co-operatives but commercialisation of crops were not successful on a supralocal level. On the one hand, both spaces – local and regional – were related; on the other hand, both acted as autonomous economical structures if there were necessary.

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### 7.33 Nancy Berlage – The Farm Bureau Co-operatives: social and cultural formation at the local level

This paper examines how during the 1910s through 1920s, rural Americans organised a new farm organisation, the Farm Bureau, and formed co-operatives, in response to large-scale societal change. To accommodate rapid change, Bureau members sought to ‘modernise’ while preserving what they called a traditional rural ‘way of life.’ As one farmer stated, co-operatives offered a modern method of ‘counterorganisation’ against threats to farm family life. The Farm Bureau, while federated at the state and national levels, was most vital at the county level. Sophisticated recruiting methods drew the entire farm family to the county Farm Bureaus, which offered a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural activities. An unusually devoted membership supported county co-operatives – such as hog cholera serum and pure seed associations. Farm Bureau members teamed up with university professionals and drew on technical and social scientific theories to rationalise their activities. Women, as an important part of the Farm Bureau, participated in co-operative organisation in a uniquely gendered way; at times they drew on the trope of separate spheres to define their roles as homemakers, at other times, they rejected domesticity, and, defining themselves as producers, formed egg marketing co-operatives. This paper is based on previously unused sources, located at agricultural colleges and Farm Bureau organisations.

**Nancy K. Berlage** received her PhD and MA in history from the Johns Hopkins University, and her BA from the University of Chicago. Her published work in rural history includes ‘Organizing the Farm Bureau: Family, Community, and Professionals, 1914-1928’, which received the Agricultural History Society’s Vernon Carstenson Award for the best article published in *Agricultural History* in 2001; ‘The Establishment of an Applied Social Science: Home Economists, Science and Reform at Cornell University,’ published in the book *Gender and American Social Science*; and several book reviews and encyclopedia articles. Her thesis on the Farm and Home Bureau was nominated for the Agricultural History Society’s best dissertation prize. She is the recipient of Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Archives Center, and Cornell University grants and fellowships, among others, for her work in rural history. She is also co-author of *History of the National Eye Institute* and *Pentagon 9-11*. Dr. Berlage has taught at Johns Hopkins and Towson Universities and previously was assistant editor for the Papers of President Eisenhower. She currently is Chief Editor and Senior Historian for the Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense. Dr. Berlage’s passion for rural history stems from growing up on a farm in northwestern Illinois.