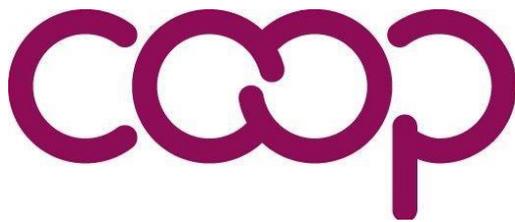


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# **A Battle of Sexes in Crete: A Hybrid Cross-Examination of the Men-Only Agricultural Cooperative and the Women-Only Cottage Industry Cooperative in Krousonas**

Maria Mathioudaki, MSc SEE Hellenic Open University, Crete, Greece,  
email: mmathioudaki1976@gmail.com  
Theodoros Katerinakis, MSc, PhD, Adjunct Faculty, Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA, USA) and Hellenic Open University/SSE  
Graduate Faculty; email: tkaterinakis@gmail.com

## **Abstract for a poster**

Cooperatives seem to be an effective participatory strategy to bootstrap local communities to the socio-economic mainstream, both for men and women. In Crete, one of the largest islands of EU in Greece, cooperatives are the most common ventures for Social and Solidarity Economy. In the small town of Krousonas on the foothills of the Cretan mountain of Psiloritis, home economics evolves to cottage industry and manufacturing cooperatives. The Agricultural Cooperative of Krousonas (ASK) was established in 1925 with the mission to manage the olive farms and oil production of the village, a labor-intensive activity exercised by males. Several decades later in 1999 women (only) took the initiative to move from cottage industry baking to a manufacturing cooperative by founding “Krousaniotissa” (AOSK), as a live/work coop. A qualitative study with participant observation while they operate, interviews with informants and structured discussions investigates what kind of problems they face, if these cooperatives remain financially independent today, what is the social impact of the coexistence of the two cooperatives in a mountain village, how members and employees feel about their participation in them etc. The current research integrates financial reports to address questions of economic efficiency and scaling for the collaboration of ASK and AOSK.

Issues of role stereotyping, women emancipation, competition vs cooperation, economic distress, interdependency and resilience arise, as cooperatives create economic, human, and social capital (in Putman’s terms). The study concludes with a challenge of trust in Krousonas, although the two cooperatives appear they might well be the first-choice business model for locally based, independently controlled community development.

**Keywords:** Agricultural cooperatives, Women-only cooperatives, social capital, trust, Krousonas