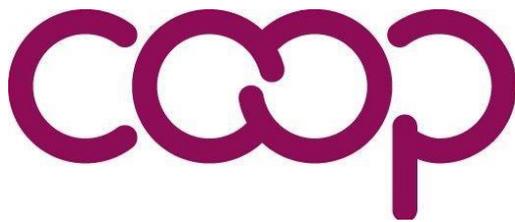


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“Rethinking co-operatives: From local to global and from the past to the future”

13-15 July 2022, Athens Greece

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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΥΝΕΤΑΙΡΙΑΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

& ΜΕΛΕΤΩΝ (ΙΣΕΜ)

Title of abstract: Examining Change in the Aboriginal Co-operative Sector: Lessons for Self-Determination

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Abstract : (299 words)

The purpose of this paper is to document and analyse the Aboriginal co-operative sector so as to provide a platform for further investigation. In Australia and around the world, there is a growing awareness of co-operative, mutual and community-controlled enterprises (CMEs) functioning as effective organisational strategies for service provision and community development. A key reason for this is the democratic governance models embedded within CMEs that allow members their own voice in decision-making processes, whether through direct representation or by a member-elected Board. For Australia's Indigenous peoples, these models have proven to be effective vehicles for building self-determination by embedding decision-making power into their communities and providing Aboriginal peoples with means to build social, cultural and economic wellbeing on their own terms.

As co-operative governance has been observed as a method for protecting cultural tradition for ethnic communities, understanding the current landscape of Aboriginal co-operatives would bring visibility to a sector of Aboriginal employment and provide a platform for stories of Aboriginal self-determination.

Preliminary research into the registrations of Aboriginal businesses provides an insight into the substantial share of co-operatives that have incorporated over the past two decades. A study in 2015 established the number of registered co-operatives at seventy-six (Mazzarol, 2015). As of 2020, approximately forty-three remain (active) registered co-operatives; the shortfall attributed to incorporation, dissolution and amalgamation. Understanding this process and its impact on community control and self-determination would be a potential outcome of this work.

This study will seek to give breadth to the diversity of the co-operative form within academic literature by identifying and analysing the services provided through Aboriginal co-operatives,

as well as contribute to the investigation of how self-determination functions in practice. Additionally, this exploration will add to the international body of literature on Indigenous peoples' projects of community control and co-operative economics.

Keywords: co-operatives, Indigenous economy, self-determination, community economies