Co-operatives in Nineteenth Century Australia

ARC Discovery Project - Co-operatives in Australia – Explaining Growth, Decline and Revival (DP170100573)
Outline

• The Visual Atlas of Australian Co-operatives History Project (VAACHP)
• Issues with Researching Nineteenth Century Australian Co-operatives
• Co-operatives in Nineteenth Century Australia – the State of Play
• Some Early Findings of the AVACHP
• Concluding Remarks
The VAACHP

- Long term and deep time research on why co-operatives form, grow, decline and die
- Covers all co-operatives including co-operative federations and co-operative auxiliaries (Women’s Co-operative Guilds)
- Range of data sources including Trove and UK Co-operative Wholesale Society records
- Accompanied by case studies
- A central, open-data platform of co-operatives
- National Atlas of Productive Ageing
- Tableau Public software
- Main data inputted is location, date of operation, type of co-operative, membership, employment and finances
- Can provide other information such as the average life of co-operatives and trends in mutualisation/demutualisation
- Inter-disciplinary project
Issues with Researching Nineteenth Century Co-operatives

• Definitions
  • Rochdale principles
  • Pre Rochdale co-operatives (bread and flour societies, Owen, King)
  • Legislation (Friendly Societies, Industrial and Provident, Companies)
  • Australian experience (bogus co-operatives)

• Data
  • Registrars’ records
Co-operatives in Nineteenth Century Australia – the State of Play

• Pre 1850 (Lewis, Quinlan, Irving)
  • Cunningham
  • Kentish
  • Colonial Society for the Advancement of the Social System

• Rochdale co-operatives (Brisbane)

• Fluctuations in second half of the nineteenth century

• 1890’s Depression (Lewis, Markey)

• Dairy Co-operatives
Some Early Findings of the VAACHP

Overview of Australian co-operatives and nineteenth century co-operatives

https://public.tableau.com/profile/algonturi-/!/vizhome/CoopFinalVer10_0/Welcome?publish=yes
Nineteenth Century Australia
Some Early Findings of the VAACHP (2)

- Presence since late 1820s
- Bursts of activity –
  - 1851 (building societies, bread and flour societies)
  - 1856 (building societies, worker co-operative – gold mining)
  - 1866 (Rochdale consumer co-operatives, Sir Henry Parkes)
  - 1873 (Rochdale consumer co-operatives, co-operative flour mills)
  - 1885 (Rochdale consumer co-operatives, dairy industry, Lithgow Ironworks)
Some Early Findings of the VAACHP (3)

• Growth 1886-1897
  • Growth of agriculture
  • Regional clusters e.g., Hunter Valley
  • Friendly society health co-operatives
  • Producer co-operatives (workers and outside investors)
  • Visit of Co-operative Wholesale Society (1896)
    • Agricultural co-ops
    • Brief but unsuccessful attempts to form co-op peak organisations
Concluding Remarks

- ARC Discovery Project - Co-operatives in Australia – Explaining Growth, Decline and Revival (DP170100573)
- VAACHP – Deep time research/changes as new data entered
- Definitional, legal and archival issues
- Presence of co-operatives since 1820s and bursts of activities
- Thank you and questions