TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR CO-OPERATIVES 
AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN DEVELOPED AND 
TRANSITION COUNTRIES

Carlo Borzaga, Roger Spear, 
Trento Publishing House, Italy, 2004

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Roger Spear is a professor of the Co-operatives Research Unit, 
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Religion and value-driven social entrepreneurship and Civil society and the 
‘commanding heights’ the civil economy: past, present, future in 2010.

This book is not translated into Romanian. The review was made in 
English version. The book was published at Trento Publishing House 
and costs 28 euro.

The title of this book Trends and challenges for co-operatives and 
social enterprises in developed and transition countries arouses public

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interest by using concepts such as co-operatives, social enterprises, developed countries, concepts that send to an area increasingly concerned with the social economy, in recent years.

In the introduction to the book the two authors pay particular attention to the social actors and organizations of co-operative type. The prospects and changes in the new business areas and the difficulties encountered in the process of transformation are presented in the foreground. The study includes not only an analysis of the economic environment in which the co-operatives have developed and evolved but also a presentation of the countries and the legal framework which have accompanied the development of cooperatives.

The book is structured in three parts: the first part is a general analysis of co-operative phenomenon, the second part presents the conditions for co-operative development in different countries and the last part, the third one, is dedicated to the development of economic and social role of co-operatives in transition economies.

In the first part it is shown the contribution of the following authors: Giulia Galera – *The evolution of co-operative form – an international perspective*, Ian MacPherson – *Remembering the Big Picture: the co-operative movement and contemporary communities*, Hans Miinkner – *Multi-stakeholder co-operatives and their legal framework*, Enzo Pezzini – *The European co-operative society: a new step in European company law*.

The authors raise issues related to: the evolution and the potential of cooperatives, cooperative models, some of the socio-economic changes that have supported their development and transformation and the globalization effects on cooperatives. There are presented a number of countries such as Italy, Spain, England, Portugal and France that developed cooperative with new perspectives and a new approach to the social economy.

The authors mention some of the changes in economic, social and technological departments and those changes are related to the structure of the new economy, working conditions, social structure of family, social structure of school and community. It is also underlined
the changing role of the state and its involvement in the economy, changing is seen as the engine of the development of cooperatives.


In this part, the transformations that have been passed合作社s in the second half of the twentieth century are brought into question. It highlights the good operating principles and the importance of the legal and financial environment for the development of cooperatives. It is also discussed the issue of „hybridization” and „degeneration” of co-operatives. The authors described the experiences of Spain, Switzerland, France and Quebec and the factors that influenced these experiences. These factors are global competition, access to finance, undercapitalization and decapitalization, changes in the socioeconomic environment and reactions at the level of each country in which these experiences occurred.


This last part is the largest in the book and describes the experiences of cooperatives in countries such as Poland, Serbia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania. The authors state that the communist
regime left its imprint and greatly influenced the evolution and development of cooperatives.

The recovery of co-operative sector was extremely slow after 1989 because of liberal government policies such as: privatization, commercialization, or individual entrepreneurship but also because of the fact that macroeconomic reforms were more important than microeconomic reforms. Poverty, unemployment, stress are some of the negative effects found in the former communist countries.

After 1990 have begun to feel the positive changes in these countries, changes that support and promote the third sector social economy and social initiatives and support the social initiative of co-operatives. In this part of the volume is pointed out that many measures are needed at the legislative level in each of these countries, both to promote and support the third sector and to develop links with other European communities.

The volume provides an overview of cooperatives historical analysis of evolution, of change and the challenges that these institutions have met since 1990. Theme of the book is very well developed. The information presented in this book is for trained people in the social economy and not for a large public. The present volume provides a review of the types of cooperative, how to develop and support the co-operatives, the experience that countries like France, Canada, Spain, Switzerland, Poland, Serbia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Bulgaria have had with co-operatives. I mention that Romania’s experience in the social economy has not been presented in this book.

The presentation of experience that these countries have had can be considered a necessary support for the changes and for the evolution of these types of institutions such as cooperatives.