

‘A model co-operative country’: Irish–Finnish contacts at the turn of the twentieth century

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ABSTRACT. *Agricultural co-operative societies were widely discussed across late nineteenth-century Europe as a potential solution to the problems of agricultural depression, land reform and rural poverty. In Finland, the agronomist Hannes Gebhard drew inspiration from examples across Europe in founding the Pellervo Society, to promote rural cooperation, in 1899. He noted that Ireland’s ‘tragic history’, its struggle for national self-determination and the introduction of co-operative dairies to tackle rural poverty, seemed to offer a useful example for Finnish reformers. This article explores the exchanges between Irish and Finnish co-operators around the turn of the century, and examines the ways in which the parallels between the two countries were constructed and presented by those involved in these exchanges. I will also consider the reasons for the divergence in the development of cooperation, so that even before the First World War it was Finland, not Ireland, that had begun to be regarded as ‘a model co-operative country’.*

Agricultural co-operative societies were widely discussed across late nineteenth-century Europe as a potential solution to the problems of agricultural depression, land reform and rural poverty.¹ Rural cooperation could take many forms. It included co-operative creameries² and slaughterhouses for processing agricultural goods; national federations to market, standardise and export goods such as butter and bacon; purchasing societies to supply farmers with necessities such as fertiliser and animal feed; credit unions and rural banks. Notably in Denmark and Finland, some consumer co-operative societies for the supply of groceries and household essentials were also considered part of the wider agricultural

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¹ Mary Hilson, Pirjo Markkola and Ann-Catrin Östman, ‘Introduction: co-operatives and the social question’, in eadem (eds), *Co-operatives and the social question: the co-operative movement in northern and eastern Europe (1880–1950)* (Cardiff, 2012), pp 1–24; see also the other chapters in the same volume.

² Co-operative creameries or dairies (Finnish: osuusmeijeri; Swedish: andelsmejeri) collected milk from their farmer members for processing into products such as butter. In Ireland they were always known as creameries. To avoid confusion, the latter term is used throughout the article. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for alerting me to this point.)

co-operative movement.³ For their supporters, co-operative societies served above all an economic function, providing small farmers with the means to avoid debt, raise capital, adopt technological innovations and adapt their production to the needs of international markets. Co-operatives thus provided a potential solution to the problems faced by small peasant proprietors in conjunction with, or in the wake of, land reform.⁴ Frequently, however, cooperation was also ascribed a moral purpose. Self-help and education would encourage European peasants to resist the temptation to emigrate or to espouse radical ideologies, and ensure that they would instead take their rightful place as the backbone of the modern nation state. Agricultural co-operatives thus played an important role in the nationalist mobilisations of the early-twentieth century.⁵

This article takes the example of the agrarian co-operative movement to examine some comparative and transnational dimensions of debates about agricultural development and rural mobilisation in Finland and Ireland in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In both countries, agricultural cooperation is understood to have emerged in response to the post-depression agricultural crisis and the development of a commercial agricultural sector aimed primarily at the export market. Cooperation was discussed in the context of wider debates about land reform and the ‘social question’, especially as it affected tenant farmers and peasant proprietors. Like in eastern Europe, its development also has to be seen in relation to wider political movements in the years before independence.⁶

These similarities are not surprising, for Ireland was frequently referred to by Finnish co-operative reformers and the Finnish co-operative organisation Pellervo (founded 1899) was partly modelled on the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (I.A.O.S., founded 1894). There were a number of at least superficial similarities between Finland and Ireland in the years before the First World War.⁷ Both were the peripheral, subject territories of large empires, a status that was being challenged by vigorous nationalist movements by the end of the nineteenth century.⁸ Both were, moreover, largely rural societies dominated by agriculture. The late nineteenth-century ‘social question’, in each case, was not so much about sprawling cities and industrial workers as it was about the welfare and social integration of the rural population, especially small tenant farmers.⁹ Still in living memory, of course, were the terrible subsistence crises of the 1840s in Ireland and the 1860s in

³ Mary Hilson, ‘The Nordic consumer co-operative movements in international perspective, 1890–1939’ in Risto Alapuro and Henrik Stenius (eds), *Nordic associations in a European perspective* (Baden-Baden, 2010), p. 229.

⁴ Anu Mai Kõll, ‘Cooperatives as part of the national movement in the Baltic countries’ in Torsten Lorenz (ed.), *Cooperatives in ethnic conflicts: eastern Europe in the 19th and early 20th century* (Berlin, 2006), pp 45–58.

⁵ Torsten Lorenz, ‘Introduction: cooperatives in ethnic conflicts’ in Lorenz (ed.), *Cooperatives in ethnic conflicts*, pp 9–44.

⁶ Hilson, Markkola & Östman, ‘Introduction’, pp 8–11.

⁷ For more on the similarities and contrasts in the Irish and Finnish experiences, see the introduction to this collection by Mc Mahon and Newby.

⁸ Bill Kissane, ‘Nineteenth-century nationalism in Finland and Ireland: a comparative analysis’ in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vi, no. 2 (2000), p. 25.

⁹ Hilson, Markkola & Östman, ‘Introduction’, pp 1–24.

Finland.¹⁰ But debates about the social question were also shaped by two continuing processes of change: firstly, the need for farmers to adapt to a new economic climate following the international agricultural depression of the 1870s; and, secondly, political debates about the land question, which in Ireland had been partially resolved by the 1880s but in Finland were to come to a head after the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹

The first part of the article considers the significance of transnational links and transfers for the early development of cooperation in Finland, with particular reference to the Irish case as a model. It asks how international models were used, how co-operative ideas were imported and how they were transformed in national contexts. In the second part of the article, I review the possible reasons for the divergence of the Irish and Finnish co-operative movements and the different roles they play in their respective national historiographies, and consider what these two cases may tell us about why co-operative societies flourish or fail more generally. The Irish co-operative movement has been compared with that of other European countries including Denmark, the Netherlands and France, but there are no direct comparisons with Finland, despite the existence of the contacts mentioned above.¹²

The sources for the article include the foreign correspondence of the Pellervo Society, some of which is also included in the personal correspondence of its founder, Hannes Gebhard, at the National Archives of Finland in Helsinki. This has been supplemented with material from contemporary published sources, including co-operative journals, newspapers, books and pamphlets. The focus on the Finnish sources reflects the strength of the Irish influence on the Finnish movement, at least during its early years. For Ireland, I have relied more heavily on secondary sources, including Patrick Doyle's doctoral thesis on the I.A.O.S., which was especially helpful.

I

The roots of cooperation were diverse and multi-centred.¹³ The system of consumer cooperation attributed to the Rochdale Pioneers came to be widely

¹⁰ For a comparative account, see Andrew G. Newby, "'Acting in their appropriate and wanted sphere": the Society of Friends and Famine in Ireland and Finland, c.1845–68' in Patrick Fitzgerald, Christine Kinealy and Gerard Moran (eds), *Irish hunger and migration: myth, memory and memorialization* (Quinnipiac, 2015), pp 107–20, 190.

¹¹ On land conflicts in early twentieth-century Finland, see Sami Suodenjoki, 'Land agitation and the rise of agrarian socialism in south-western Finland, 1899–1907' in Mary Hilson, Silke Neunsinger and Iben Vyff (eds), *Labour, unions and politics under the north star: the Nordic countries, 1700–2000* (New York, 2017). See also Sami Suodenjoki's contribution to this collection.

¹² Timothy W. Guinnane, 'A failed institutional transplant: Raiffeisen's credit co-operatives in Ireland, 1894–1914' in *Explorations in Economic History*, xxxi, no. 1 (1994), pp 28–61; Carla King, 'The early development of agricultural co-operation: some French and Irish comparisons' in *Proc. R.I.A.*, sect. c, xcvi, no. 3 (1996), pp 67–86; Kevin H. O'Rourke, 'Culture, conflict and co-operation: Irish dairying before the Great War' in *The Economic Journal*, cxvii, no. 523 (2007), pp 1357–79; Christopher L. Colvin and Eoin McLaughlin, 'Raiffeisenism abroad: why did German co-operative banking fail in Ireland but prosper in the Netherlands?' *Economic History Review*, lxvii, no. 2 (2013), pp 1–25.

¹³ Mary Hilson, 'Transnational networks in the development of the co-operative movement in the early twentieth century: Finland in the Nordic context' in

known and cited, but agricultural cooperation had a different genealogy. Co-operative credit societies were strongly influenced by German examples, while from the 1880s the agricultural production societies – especially creameries and slaughterhouses – organised in Denmark came to attract international attention.¹⁴ These societies shared with consumer co-operatives the principles of democratic member control and mechanisms for distributing the surplus in proportion to patronage, but they also differed in important respects, for example in their willingness to rely on state funds to assist start up.¹⁵ Besides the material benefits of providing access to capital, technological innovation, marketing and quality control, co-operatives were perceived to have a moral purpose. They would educate their members not only in the latest agricultural techniques but also in the practicalities of business management; they would tackle the widespread problem of usury and contribute to developing self-confidence, trust and sociability within rural communities.

As Pauli Kettunen has noted, international comparisons were extremely important for the construction of national politics in the late-nineteenth century, especially in smaller nations such as Finland.¹⁶ The co-operative movement in Ireland and Finland emerged as a product of this cosmopolitan exchange of ideas. In Ireland, the main influence is generally acknowledged to be the unionist politician and landowner, Horace Plunkett, who returned to Ireland from Wyoming in 1889 and, in 1894, founded the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (I.A.O.S.) to propagandise for cooperation.¹⁷ The first co-operative creameries in Ireland pre-dated this organisation, but the movement grew rapidly from the mid-1890s.¹⁸ Based in Dublin, the I.A.O.S. employed a small team of organisers who travelled throughout the country speaking at public meetings and giving advice on the establishment of co-operative societies, especially co-operative creameries.¹⁹ As the number of societies grew, the I.A.O.S. also assisted with auditing and monitoring the business activities of societies, intervening in cases of local disputes and

Hilson, Markkola & Östman (eds), *Co-operatives and the social question*, p. 87.

¹⁴ Johnston Birchall, *The international co-operative movement* (Manchester, 1997), pp 11, 14.

¹⁵ The question of state assistance was to be the source of a schism in the International Co-operative Alliance in 1902, leading to the secession of the German union of agricultural co-operatives. See Rita Rhodes, *The International Co-operative Alliance during war and peace, 1910–1950* (London, 1995), p. 26.

¹⁶ Pauli Kettunen, 'The international construction of national challenges: the ambiguous Nordic model of welfare and competitiveness' in Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen (eds), *Beyond welfare state models: transnational historical perspectives on social policy* (Cheltenham, 2011), pp 20–2.

¹⁷ On Plunkett, see: Trevor West, *Horace Plunkett: co-operation and politics, an Irish biography* (Gerrards Cross, 1985).

¹⁸ Kennelly suggests that Plunkett's early efforts had led to the establishment of thirty co-operatives by 1893, on the eve of the formation of the I.A.O.S. (James J. Kennelly, 'The "dawn of the practical": Horace Plunkett and the cooperative movement' in *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua*, xii, no. 1 (2008), p. 70).

¹⁹ On the early years of the I.A.O.S., see: Patrick Doyle, "'Better farming, better business, better living": the Irish co-operative movement and the construction of the Irish nation-state, 1894–1932' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 2013), pp 51–4, 66–8.

providing technical and financial advice as necessary.²⁰ Until 1907, the I.A.O.S. received a government grant to support this work and education in agricultural techniques was provided in collaboration with the I.A.O.S. and the government's Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (D.A.T.I.), of which Plunkett was vice-president.²¹ Under the guidance of these institutions, the growth of the co-operative movement was impressive. Based on the I.A.O.S.'s own figures, Doyle puts the number of co-operative societies in 1900 at 477, with a total membership of 46,206, rising to 913 societies with 82,311 members in 1907.²²

In the historiography, the rapid growth of the rural Irish co-operatives from the 1890s is attributed to two separate influences. Firstly, the Parnell scandal and the defeat of home rule encouraged nationalists temporarily to abandon political strategies for a focus instead on social and economic questions.²³ This coincided, moreover, with the settlement of some key aspects of the land question that had dominated political debate for a generation.²⁴ In his book *Ireland in the new century*, first published in 1904, Plunkett described the land act of 1881 as a turning point which made possible 'the dawn of the practical'.²⁵ Practical work to start co-operatives would help to educate and empower the new class of peasant proprietors created by the land reform. Secondly, interest in agricultural cooperation was stimulated by the growth of competition in the U.K. butter market, especially from higher quality Danish produce.²⁶ Kevin O'Rourke reports that the market share of Irish butter declined from over 50 per cent in 1860 to 12 per cent in 1910, while Danish butter rose from 0.6 per cent to 37 per cent in roughly the same period.²⁷ Co-operative creameries would enable Irish farmers to adopt new

²⁰ Doyle, "Better farming", p. 67. Doyle notes that by 1907 the I.A.O.S. had eight organisers, including one woman.

²¹ Doyle, "Better farming", pp 57–8. The D.A.T.I. was the first autonomous Irish Government department to be established. On its relations with the I.A.O.S., see: Mary E. Daly, *The first department: a history of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 2002) pp 39–46.

²² Doyle, "Better farming", p. 111, table 2.1. Note that Jenkins gives a much lower figure for 1900 of 171 co-operative societies with 26,577 members: William Jenkins, 'Capitalism and co-operators: agricultural transformation, contested space and identity politics in South Tipperary, Ireland, 1890–1914' in *Journal of Historical Geography*, xxx, no. 1 (2004), p. 94. Doyle's figures for 1908 are consistent with those reported by R. A. Anderson to the International Co-operative Alliance in 1910 (see table 1), except that he gives the number of societies as 881 instead of 882.

²³ P. J. Mathews, *Revival: the Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the co-operative movement* (Cork, 2003), pp 6–10.

²⁴ Doyle, "Better farming", pp 54–5; Kennelly, 'The "dawn of the practical"', pp 67–8.

²⁵ Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the new century*, (3rd ed., London, 1905), pp 11–12. See also Kennelly, 'The "dawn of the practical"', pp 62–81.

²⁶ Doyle, "Better farming", p. 53; Jenkins, 'Capitalism and co-operators', p. 91; Kennelly, 'The "dawn of the practical"', p. 64; King, 'The early development of agricultural co-operation', p. 68. Jenkins gives an even steeper decline for market share of Irish butter, to a low of only 0.3 per cent in 1884 on the London market. See also Markus Lampe and Paul Sharp, 'Greasing the wheels of rural transformation? Margarine and the competition for the British butter market' in *Economic History Review*, lxvii, no. 3 (2014), pp 769–92.

²⁷ Kevin H. O'Rourke, 'Property rights, politics and innovation: creamery diffusion in pre-1914 Ireland' in *Explorations in Economic History*, xi, no. 3 (2007), pp 359–417.

technologies, especially the centrifugal cream separator, and switch from production of churn butter to creamery products of a better and more consistent quality.²⁸

The same mix of moral and commercial aims can also be discerned in discussions of agricultural cooperation in Finland.²⁹ Here, too, the pioneers of co-operative organisation were familiar with a range of foreign examples, including the well-known and successful societies of Germany and Denmark. The ‘father of Finnish co-operation’, agronomist Hannes Gebhard, claimed to have discovered the co-operative idea while studying in Berlin in 1893–4 and published a book on cooperation in a number of larger European countries in 1899.³⁰ Gebhard’s biographer, Aulis J. Alanen, reports that it was during a further study trip in 1898–9 that Gebhard became aware of the Irish co-operative movement, but this must have been during a visit to London for there is no evidence in the biographical sources that he ever visited Ireland in person.³¹ Nonetheless, the I.A.O.S. became a model for the establishment in 1899 of a similar organisation to promote agricultural cooperation in Finland, the Pellervo Society. Gebhard’s correspondence with the I.A.O.S. secretary, R. A. Anderson, in 1899 referred to the receipt of the Irish organisation’s annual reports and journals, and his own account of the formation and aims of Pellervo was published in the *Irish Homestead* the same year.³²

Gebhard’s most detailed discussion of the Irish situation is to be found in his 1899 lectures, published as *Maanviljelijät yhteistoimintaan!* [Farmers into co-operation!]³³ In the first lecture, Gebhard paints a picture of Ireland as a formerly free and independent country suffering under the oppression of a hostile power, shaped by a ‘tragic history’ which had demoralised its people,

See also Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history, 1780–1939* (Oxford, 1994) on the performance of Irish agriculture in this period more generally.

²⁸ Jenkins, ‘Capitalism and co-operators’, pp 88–91.

²⁹ Ann-Catrin Östman, ‘Civilising and mobilising the peasantry: co-operative organisation and understandings of progress and gender in Finland, c.1899–1918’, in Hilson, Markkola & Östman (eds), *Co-operatives and the social question*, pp 121–36.

³⁰ Anna-Liisa Sysiharju, ‘Gebhard, Hannes (1864–1933)’ in *Suomen Kansallisbiografia* (<http://www.kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/4278>) (25 May 2017); Riitta Mäkinen and Anna-Liisa Sysiharju, *Eteenpäin ja ylöspäin: Hedvig Gebhardin osuus ja toiminta* (Helsinki, 2006), pp 73–5. Gebhard’s book was published as Hannes Gebhard, *Maanviljelijäin yhteistoiminnasta ulkomailla* (Helsinki, 1899). See also Hilson, ‘Transnational networks’, p. 89.

³¹ Aulis J. Alanen, *Hannes Gebhard* (Helsinki, 1964), p. 210. Gebhard’s biographical entry in the Helsinki University catalogue notes that he undertook study trips to Germany and Austria in 1893–4 and to Scandinavia, Germany, Paris and London in 1898–9. See: Tor Carpelan och L. O. Th. Tudeer, *Helsingfors universitet. Lärare och tjänstemän från år 1828* (Helsingfors, 1925), pp 246–50. I am grateful to Stefan Nygård for bringing this source to my attention.

³² R. A. Anderson to Hannes Gebhard, 27 Nov. 1899; G. Russell to Hannes Gebhard, 11, 16 Jan. 1900 (Kansallisarkisto, Helsinki (hereafter K.A.)), Hannes Gebhardin arkisto, Saapuneet kirjeet I, 1882–1932); Hannes Gebhard, ‘Agricultural organisation in Finland’ in *Irish Homestead*, 30 Dec. 1899 (Pellervo Seuran arkisto, Helsinki (hereafter Pellervo), press cuttings).

³³ All references here are to the Swedish edition: Hannes Gebhard, *Andelsvärksamhet bland jordbrukarna! Tre föredrag* (Helsingfors, 1899).

weakened its economy and oppressed its priesthood.³⁴ Although – like in Finland – Irish nationalists were still engaged in the struggle for full political autonomy, there had been a breakthrough in land reform, which had allowed Ireland's tenant farmers to own their own land.³⁵ The promise of a brighter future, argued Gebhard, now lay in the organisation of an agricultural co-operative movement 'to raise the lower classes of people both economically as well as morally and socially'.³⁶ The first steps towards this had been taken by Plunkett and Ireland's 'leading men', who had founded an organisation to campaign for these ends.

Gebhard then attempted to draw lessons from the Irish situation for Finland. Above all, he insisted on the need to develop agriculture as the route to prosperity, rejecting the model of industrial capitalism offered by Britain and Germany with their polarised class societies.³⁷ In the second lecture he turned to a discussion of successful agricultural societies in Germany and France, focusing especially on the Raiffeisen credit co-operatives. He concluded, however, in his third lecture, by insisting on the diversity of the co-operative movement and the need to remain open to different forms. Finland could not afford to rely exclusively on co-operative creameries, for example, as that would leave the economy disastrously exposed in the event of the vital British market being cut off due to war with Russia. Worthy of note is his conviction that cooperation would not emerge as a spontaneous, grassroots movement in Finland, as it had done in Denmark. This was due to the lower levels of education and also the sparse distribution of the population. Instead, he envisaged an elite group of educators, 'travelling "laukkufinnar" [literally 'satchel Finns'] with their satchels filled with practical knowledge', who would travel around the countryside to educate the general population about cooperation.³⁸

The new organisation would thus be in the tradition of earlier efforts to promote agricultural improvement, stemming from the agricultural societies of the eighteenth century.³⁹ As Jani Marjanen has shown, the Finnish Economic Society (*Finska hushållningssällskapet*), founded in 1797, was also shaped by contemporary transnational debates about agriculture and economic development. The example of the Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures and Other Useful Arts, founded in 1731, was certainly well known in Finland, though Marjanen also notes that by the

³⁴ Gebhard, *Andelsvärksamhet*, p. 9: 'det största elände, folkets sedliga förvildning och dess ekonomiska förslappning ... deras präster förföljdes såsom vilda djur'.

³⁵ Throughout his lecture Gebhard refers to the small farmers as 'torpare' (in Finnish 'torppari'). This term is sometimes translated into English as crofter, but 'tenant farmer' seems more appropriate. For further discussion of the term 'torppari' see Suodenjoki, 'Land agitation', n. 8.

³⁶ Gebhard, *Andelsvärksamhet*, p. 14: 'för de lägre folkklassernas höjande i såväl ekonomiskt som sedligt och samhälleligt afseende'.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Gebhard writes that in England '[t]he independent peasant class has disappeared and in its place has grown up a class of large property owners and a working population living in misery' ('Den själfständiga allmogeklassen har försvunnit och i dess ställe har uppuxit en klass af stora godsägare och en i elände lefvande arbetarebefolkning').

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 54–6: 'kringvarande "laukkufinnar" med "laukkun" full af praktiska kunskaper'.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

1790s Ireland had become less important as a source of inspiration for Finnish reformers, possibly because of the political radicalisation of that decade.⁴⁰

There were thus some close similarities between Pellervo and the I.A.O.S., at least in the early years of their existence. Most importantly, neither was a co-operative society in its own right, but rather an association of sympathisers intended to stimulate the organisation of cooperation.⁴¹ Both owed something to the paternalist view that the Finnish and Irish farmers could not necessarily be relied upon to discover cooperation for themselves, but would be awakened and guided under the tutelage of enlightened and patriotic individuals.⁴² As Ann-Catrin Östman has noted, Finnish peasants were often portrayed by Pellervo reformers in negative terms, as passive, helpless and prone to laziness.⁴³ In 1902 an article in Pellervo's journal noted that the I.A.O.S. was able to employ twelve travelling instructors to cover an area far smaller than Finland, which only had three.⁴⁴ The importance of this was not lost on foreign observers: it was noted in the journal of the International Co-operative Alliance that 'the co-operative movement in Finland appears to be the conscientious and systematic work of a small number of intellectuals', its success attributable not only to the 'sense of solidarity and discipline' among the people but above all that 'they show a willingness to be led'.⁴⁵

Here too, the Irish society served as a model for the founders of Pellervo. In a letter to Gebhard in 1900, the nationalist poet and mystic George Russell (often referred to by his nom de plume Æ), who edited the I.A.O.S. journal, the *Irish Homestead*, described how the I.A.O.S. was attempting 'to promote patriotism, public spirit, and thereby make an intelligent and unselfish co-operation for national ends more possible'. This had been done through efforts to revive the 'village institution known as the "Ceilidh"' and he added that, 'I have no doubt that in Finland there is a traditional literature, poetry, songs &c which could be systematically taught to all members, and which would be the best means of working up public spirit and philanthropic work'.⁴⁶ The link between cooperation and the cultural nationalist aspiration to revive an 'authentic' rural past was not lost on the founders of Pellervo: the name of

⁴⁰ Jani Marjanen, 'Den ekonomiska patriotismens uppgång och fall: Finska hushållningssällskapet i europeisk, svensk och finsk kontext, 1720-1840' (Ph.D. thesis, Helsinki University, 2013), pp 40–3, 157, 191–2. Gebhard also made a brief reference to the Dublin Society in his book on agricultural cooperation abroad: Gebhard, *Maanviljejäin yhteistoiminnasta*, p. 19.

⁴¹ In this respect they were very different to the Danish agricultural co-operative movement, for example, as noted by Ingrid Henriksen, Eoin McLaughlin and Paul Sharp, 'Contracts and cooperation: the relative failure of the Irish dairy industry in the late nineteenth century reconsidered' in *European Review of Economic History*, 19 (2015), p. 417.

⁴² See Östman, 'Civilising and mobilising the peasantry', p. 127.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp 133–5.

⁴⁴ 'En tredje reseinstruktör i Sällskapet Pellervo' in *Pellervo* (Feb. 1902), p. 70. All references to the journal *Pellervo* are to the Swedish edition (accessed through the Finnish National Library Digital Collections, <http://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/aikakausi>) (25 May 2017).

⁴⁵ 'A model co-operative country' in *International Co-operative Bulletin* (Feb. 1913), pp 33–7.

⁴⁶ G. Russell to Hannes Gebhard, 16 Nov. 1900 (K.A., Hannes Gebhardin saapuneet kirjeet); also cited in Hilson, 'Transnational networks', p. 94.

the society, after all, recalled a figure from the national epic the *Kalevala*.⁴⁷ In 1912 it translated and published Russell's book *Co-operation and nationality*, under the slightly different title of 'Co-operation and national welfare'.⁴⁸

In contrast to Ireland, however, there was perhaps a greater emphasis on the pragmatic, economic side of cooperation, at least in Gebhard's own writings. 'The economic side is decisive for those who form co-operative associations', he wrote to his Pellervo colleague Axel Granström in 1901, 'they do so in order to earn money'.⁴⁹ By the mid-1900s, the Irish co-operative movement was generating interest not only as a model for Finland, but also as a potential challenger in increasingly competitive international markets. The only time, according to the available sources, that a Finnish cooperator actually visited Ireland in person was in 1905, when an unnamed butter expert travelled to Limerick to assess the extent to which Ireland was likely to compete with Finland in the international butter market. He visited both a creamery and depots and noted in great detail the techniques used to pack the butter, as well as sampling different Irish grades. The conclusion was that Ireland was as yet too underdeveloped to be truly competitive but that the conditions for production and, most importantly, its proximity to the international markets in London, meant that 'Ireland ought to be the most feared competitor for the Scandinavian countries and the Finnish creameries'.⁵⁰ Concern about the growth of competition from Ireland and the British dominions was expressed quite frequently in the Pellervo journals at this time.⁵¹

This examination of the beginnings of cooperation in Finland and Ireland suggests some of the paradoxes of the agricultural co-operative movement in the early-twentieth century. Cooperation was portrayed as a movement for self-help, but, as we have seen, its founders sometimes demonstrated remarkably little confidence in the ability of those they intended to encourage, without the guidance of educated elites and the support of the state. It was, at once, a movement driven by commercial and moral imperatives. It would allow small farmers to adopt the latest agricultural technologies and adapt their production for the international markets but at the same time this was a vision of modernity that placed the peasant farmer – and the 'traditional' rural culture of which he was supposed to be the guardian – at the centre. In *Co-operation and nationality*, George Russell suggested that Irish farmers had

⁴⁷ Markku Kuisma, Annastiina Henttinen, Sami Karhu and Maritta Pohls, *The Pellervo story: a century of Finnish cooperation 1899-1999*, trans. Michael Wynne-Ellis (Helsinki, 1999), p. 12.

⁴⁸ Pellervo to Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, 20 Dec. 1912 (Pellervo, *Ulkomaankirjeenvaihtoa, 1911–1925*); George W. Russell, *Co-operation and nationality: a guide for rural reformers from this to the next generation* (Dublin, 1912); published in Finnish as George W. Russell, *Osuustoiminta ja kansan hyvinvointi*, trans. Huvi Vuorinen (Porvoo, 1912).

⁴⁹ Hannes Gebhard to Axel Granström, 1901 (K.A., HGn arkisto; microfilm PR91): 'För dem, som bilda andelslag, måste den ekonomiska sidan vara den bestämmande, de bilda andelslag för att förtjäna pengar'. Also cited in Hilson, 'Transnational networks', p. 90.

⁵⁰ Ad. R. 'Några iakttagelser från en resa till England och Irland' in *Pellervo* (Oct. 1905), pp 275–9: 'Irland borde vara den mest fruktade konkurrenten för de skandinaviska länderna och Finlands mejerier'.

⁵¹ *Pellervo* (Nov. 1905), p. 321; (Mar. 1906), p. 67; (Sept. 1907), p. 282; (July 1909), p. 235; (Sept. 1910), p. 252.

Table 1. Co-operative societies, members and turnover in Ireland, 1908

Type of society	Number of societies	Members	Turnover
Creameries (+ auxiliaries)	357	42,404	£1,726,596
Agricultural purchase societies	166	12,999	£72,595
Poultry societies	24	6650	£72,595
Agricultural banks (Raiffeisen credit co-operatives)	268	17,403	£56,004
Miscellaneous home industries (mostly flax producers in Ulster)	67	6483	£310,138
TOTAL	882	85,939	£2,252,380

Source: Anderson, 'Agricultural co-operation in Ireland', p. 120.

lost their standing in British markets when 'Denmark ... turned itself into a machine', a phrase that seems to express his ambivalence to the modern commercial agriculture he was trying to create.⁵²

II

Under the guidance of the I.A.O.S. and Pellervo respectively, the agricultural co-operative movements of Ireland and Finland expanded quickly during the first decade of the twentieth century. Constructing reliable international comparisons of co-operative society membership and trade presents some difficulties, but like other international organisations of this era the International Co-operative Alliance (I.C.A., founded 1895) devoted some of its resources to the collection of statistical data. The snapshot of pre-1914 cooperation offered by I.C.A. sources suggests a movement that was vigorous and expanding in both countries. In a paper delivered to the I.C.A. congress in 1910, R. A. Anderson reported that, despite recent difficulties between the I.A.O.S. and the D.A.T.I., there were 882 co-operative societies with nearly 86,000 members in Ireland in 1908 (Table 1).⁵³ Of these, the largest group (two-fifths of all co-operative societies) was the co-operative creameries and their auxiliaries. By the outbreak of the First World War these numbers had grown to over 1,000 co-operative societies with a combined membership of over 100,000.⁵⁴

⁵² Russell, *Co-operation and nationality*, p. 16. Elsewhere (p. 40), Russell criticised modern agriculture and land use more explicitly: 'the deer forests in Scotland, the game preserves in England, the deserts of grass in Ireland, are gigantic illustrations of ... desolation and decay'.

⁵³ R. A. Anderson, 'Agricultural co-operation in Ireland' in *Report of the proceedings of the eighth congress of the international co-operative alliance held at Hamburg, 5th to 7th September, 1910* (London, 1910), p. 120. I.C.A. congresses were usually held every three years, in different European cities.

⁵⁴ Doyle, "'Better farming'", p. 111, table 2.1. Carla Keating gives a figure of 916 co-operatives in 1915 with a total membership of 105,541. Over a third of co-operative membership was accounted for by dairy co-operatives. See: Carla Keating, 'Plunkett,

Table 2. Co-operative societies, members and turnover in Finland, 1911

Type of society	Number of societies	Members	Turnover in £ sterling
Distributive societies	306	87,000	£1,900,000
Co-operative creameries	370	34,500	£1,160,000
Credit societies	441	17,000	£164,000
TOTAL	1117	138,500	£3,224,000

Source: 'A model co-operative country' in *International Co-operative Bulletin* (Feb. 1913), pp 33–7.

The growth of the Finnish movement was reviewed in the I.C.A.'s *International Co-operative Bulletin* in 1913, under the title 'A model co-operative country' (Table 2). Commending the Pellervo Society for the scientific rigour with which its statistics had been compiled, the anonymous author concluded that, '[i]n the history of the co-operative movement there is scarcely a second example to be met with of such astonishing, and at the same time, sound development'.⁵⁵ The figures indicate the much greater importance of the distributive or consumer co-operative societies in Finland, discussion of which is, however, beyond the scope of this article.

Despite the early successes of the co-operative movement in Ireland, by the 1930s it was regarded as having, in many respects, failed to have lived up to its original potential. Reviewing a book by I.A.O.S. organiser R. A. Anderson in 1935, a correspondent of the *Irish Times* commented that 'the co-operative movement promised highly, yet failed'.⁵⁶ Patrick Bolger's history of Irish cooperation supports this perception of a movement that had, by the 1940s, lost much of its ideological vigour and independence.⁵⁷ By contrast, in Finland and indeed the other Nordic countries, by the 1930s cooperation was established as a central feature of the famous 'middle way' compromise between socialism and capitalism.⁵⁸ 'There is no country in the world where co-operative dairying has been carried out with greater success', wrote the American Agnes Rothery in 1936, '[t]he entire social fabric is permeated with co-operative societies'.⁵⁹ Parallels between Ireland and Finland continued to

the co-operative movement and Irish rural development' in eadem (ed.), *Plunkett and co-operatives: past, present and future* (Cork, 1983), p. 61.

⁵⁵ 'A model co-operative country' in *International Co-operative Bulletin* (Feb. 1913), p. 36.

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 22 June 1935. The review considered R. A. Anderson, *With Horace Plunkett in Ireland* (London, 1935).

⁵⁷ Patrick Bolger, *The Irish co-operative movement: its history and development* (Dublin, 1977), p. 119.

⁵⁸ On the idea of a Finnish 'middle way', see J. Hampden Jackson, *Finland* (London, 1938), p. 15; Katalin Miklóssy, 'The Nordic ideal of a Central European third way: the Finnish model of Hungarian modernisation in the 1930s' in Hilson, Markkola & Östman (eds), *Co-operatives and the social question*, pp 137–52.

⁵⁹ Agnes Rothery, *Finland: the country and its people* (London, 1936), pp 110–11.

be noted, but now it was Finland that was the model society, not the other way round. Reviewing J. Hampden Jackson's 1939 book on Finland for an Irish journal, Edward J. Coyne concluded that 'we [the Irish] would do well to learn whatever lessons we can from the success of the Finns in agricultural educational methods and in their organisation of the dairy industry'.⁶⁰

This divergence is also reflected in the historiography, which has not been favourable in its assessment of the impact of agricultural cooperation in Ireland. In stark contrast to its rather prominent role in Nordic history, notably in Denmark but no less so in Finland, the co-operative movement is assumed to have played a less significant role in modern Irish social and economic history.⁶¹ F. S. L. Lyons' classic text on modern Irish history devotes a dozen or so pages to cooperation before concurring with J. J. Byrne's assessment that cooperation 'made little impact on the economic or social life of the country'.⁶² Cormac Ó Gráda's *Ireland: a new economic history* barely mentions the co-operative movement, beyond noting the failure of I.A.O.S. attempts to establish rural co-operative banks.⁶³ In a more recent economic history of Ireland, co-operative creameries are discussed only in the context of government efforts to stimulate agricultural exports, especially during the 1960s and after.⁶⁴

Recently, historians have started to reappraise the role of the I.A.O.S. as part of the cultural revival of the early-twentieth century and the emergence of a 'self-help consensus' among Irish nationalists after the fall of Parnell.⁶⁵ Patrick Doyle has suggested that the Irish co-operative movement should be understood in the context of contemporary debates over land ownership and land reform and that it contributed 'a key intellectual component of a radical nationalism that came to prominence after the First World War'.⁶⁶ P. J. Mathews notes for example the I.A.O.S.'s vision of a grassroots civilisation, based on rural traditions of mutual aid.⁶⁷ Similar ideas about cooperation

⁶⁰ Edward J. Coyne, 'Finland and its lessons for Ireland' in *Studies*, xxviii, no. 112 (1939), p. 661.

⁶¹ On the significance of cooperation in the Nordic countries see: Mads Mordhorst, 'Arla and Danish national identity – business history as cultural history' in *Business History*, lvi, no. 1 (2014), pp 116–33; Susanna Fellman, 'Growth and investment: Finnish capitalism, 1850s–2005' in Susanna Fellman, Martin Jes Iversen, Hans Sjögren and Lars Thue (eds), *Creating Nordic capitalism: the business history of a competitive periphery* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp 139–217.

⁶² J. J. Byrne, 'Æ and Sir Horace Plunkett' in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *The shaping of modern Ireland* (London, 1960), p. 162, cited in F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (2nd ed., London, 1973), p. 216.

⁶³ Ó Gráda, *Ireland*, p. 269; cf., however, Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The beginnings of the Irish creamery system, 1880–1914' in *Economic History Review*, xxx, no. 2 (1977), pp 284–305.

⁶⁴ Andy Bielenberg and Raymond Ryan, *An economic history of Ireland since independence* (London, 2013).

⁶⁵ Mathews, *Revival*, pp 6–7; D. A. J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish nation: gender, culture and Irish identity, 1890–1914* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 30.

⁶⁶ Patrick Mary Doyle, 'Reframing the "Irish Question": the role of the Irish co-operative movement in the formation of Irish nationalism, 1900–22' in *Irish Studies Review*, xxii, no. 3 (2014), p. 268; Doyle, "'Better farming'", pp 23–4, 39–40, 128, 135–8, 157.

⁶⁷ Mathews, *Revival*, p. 31.

could also be found in the work of George Russell.⁶⁸ The new government had ambitions to support co-operative creameries and credit societies during the 1920s, but, as Mary E. Daly has described in her history of the Department of Agriculture, this proved difficult to realise and led instead to 'instances of state companies emerging by default'.⁶⁹

In the comparative economic history literature, therefore, there is still a tendency to regard Irish cooperation as an example of 'failure', understood in terms of its inability to establish a dominant position within agriculture compared to other forms of business organisation such as the joint-stock company.⁷⁰ One of the main comparisons here is Denmark, where the success of co-operative creameries is seen as a crucial factor in explaining why Danish farmers were able to take advantage of new techniques in dairying and secure a growing share of the British butter market from the late-nineteenth century.⁷¹

Older research attributed much of the blame for this failure to the founder of the Irish co-operative movement, Horace Plunkett. F. S. L. Lyons referred to 'that unearthly genius he [Plunkett] had for alienating influential sections of opinion' and the 'sublime tactlessness' with which he criticised both the Catholic church and Ulster Protestants in his controversial 1904 book *Ireland in the new century*.⁷² There certainly seems to be a consensus that Plunkett had a complex personality: his biographer Trevor West described him as 'a medley of strange paradoxes' and a posthumous profile that appeared in the Finnish co-operative newspaper *Yhteishyvä* noted that if Ireland's farmers often misunderstood him then so too did members of his own Unionist Party.⁷³ Plunkett's political and religious affiliations – as a member of a prominent Anglo-Irish landowning family and Unionist M.P. for South Dublin (1892–1900) – probably did the co-operative movement little good and some nationalists at least were certainly suspicious of the potential of any movement to undermine home rule. This may well have hindered the development of the co-operative movement, even though Plunkett's support for unionism was ambivalent and often lukewarm.⁷⁴

Although Plunkett undoubtedly had a prominent role, he cannot be held solely responsible for the problems of the co-operative movement. Daly also notes consistent organisational weaknesses within the I.A.O.S. and, in

⁶⁸ Michael McAteer, 'Reactionary conservatism or radical utopianism? Æ and the Irish co-operative movement' in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxv, nos 3–4 (2000–2001), pp 148–162. On Æ see also Leeann Lane, 'Female emigration and the cooperative movement in the writings of George Russell' in *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua*, viii, no. 4 (2004), pp 84–100; Catherine Nash, 'Visionary geographies: designs for developing Ireland' in *History Workshop Journal*, xlv (1998), pp 49–78.

⁶⁹ Daly, *The first department*, pp 126–38.

⁷⁰ Guinnane, 'A failed institutional transplant', pp 28–61; Colvin & McLaughlin, 'Raiffeisenism abroad', pp 1–25. Earlier debates on Ireland's 'failure' to become 'a second Denmark' are discussed in Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Irish agriculture after the Land War' in Stanley L. Engerman and Jacob Metzger (eds), *Land rights, ethno-nationality, and sovereignty in history* (London, 2004), p. 138.

⁷¹ O'Rourke, 'Property rights, politics and innovation', pp 359–417.

⁷² Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, pp 208–9. On the controversy following Plunkett's book see also Bolger, *The Irish co-operative movement*, pp 93–5.

⁷³ West, *Horace Plunkett*, p. 221; *Yhteishyvä*, 21 Feb. 1936.

⁷⁴ Kennelly, 'The "dawn of the practical"', pp 73–9; Daly, *The first department*, pp 7–8.

particular, its ‘arrogant attitude towards public accountability’ in spending its government-allocated grant.⁷⁵ Other scholars have pointed to the difficulties the I.A.O.S. had in enforcing a ‘binding rule’ which would oblige farmers to deliver their milk to the co-operative creamery of which they were a member, meaning that co-operative creameries were in constant competition for the business of local farmers.⁷⁶ However, we should be wary of over-emphasising the influence of one organisation or individual on the history of a popular movement. Even though the I.A.O.S. was originally conceived of and functioned as a top-down organisation, cooperation ultimately flourished or failed on the strength of those who chose, or did not, to become members of co-operative societies.

The French economics professor and co-operator Charles Gide tackled the problem of why cooperation had developed so unevenly in a 1926 lecture, reprinted in the *International Co-operative Bulletin*. He considered in some detail whether differences of ‘race’ and national temperament might account for variations in cooperation. The densest areas of co-operative activity were, after all, ‘the countries of the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian races’ in contrast to the ‘Latin’ nations of southern Europe where cooperation was relatively weak. On the other hand, Belgium provided a counter example, since cooperation was highly developed in both Flemish- and Walloon-speaking areas, as did the unexpected success of cooperation among the ‘Esquimaux [*sic*]’ of Alaska.⁷⁷ Nor could cooperation be satisfactorily linked to the level of economic development, for here Finland provided a striking counter example. It had ‘no industries, and it is the country where the density of population is the weakest in the whole of Europe ... It is a desert.’ Gide also noted the lack of correlation between the level of cooperation and education, though he did acknowledge that cooperation seemed to be stronger in Protestant Europe than in Catholic districts. He concluded that there was no satisfactory explanation: the potential for cooperation was a universal human attribute and could therefore be found anywhere, although its development could be hindered by practical difficulties.⁷⁸

Modern scholars will reject essentialist assumptions about racial characteristics, but it should be acknowledged that some have attempted to explain the success or failure of cooperation with reference to variations in national culture more broadly, including religion. Human ecologist Alastair McIntosh has even alluded to a distinctive ‘Celtic ecology’, expressed in Gaelic-language poetry and song, which he suggests gave the crofting communities of western Scotland and Ireland a natural affinity for cooperation in harmony with nature.⁷⁹ In a statistical analysis based on data from thirteen different

⁷⁵ Daly, *The first department*, pp 44–5.

⁷⁶ Henriksen, McLaughlin & Sharp, ‘Contracts and cooperation’, pp 412–31.

⁷⁷ In a review of Anderson’s book *With Horace Plunkett in Ireland*, published in the *Irish Times* in 1935, Belgium was also noted, with Finland, as an example of what cooperation could achieve in Ireland (*Irish Times*, 22 June 1935).

⁷⁸ Charles Gide, ‘A review of world co-operation’ in *International Co-operative Bulletin* (Mar. 1926), pp 65–71.

⁷⁹ Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and soul: people versus corporate power* (London, 2001), pp 37–46. Similarly, romantic allusions to the ‘communism of the clan’ also formed part of radical visions for an independent Scottish state during the 1920s, propagated for example by Ruairaidh Erskine of Marr of the Scots National League. See Laurence

countries – including both Ireland and Finland – Eva Fernández concluded that 'high levels of trust and Protestantism seem to encourage the formation of farmers' co-operatives'.⁸⁰

At first glance, it seems plausible to explain the development of Irish co-operatives with reference to religion, given not only that co-operative organisation was so much denser in the overwhelmingly Protestant Nordic countries, but also that the Irish co-operatives were strongest in Ulster.⁸¹ Moreover, as noted, there is also evidence for some hostility, or at least ambivalence, to co-operatives on the part of the Catholic clergy, though as Ó Gráda points out, 'at grassroots level priests were heavily involved in creating and supporting co-operative creameries.'⁸² O'Rourke's more detailed statistical comparison of Ireland with Denmark suggests that Catholicism had little impact, however, and this seems to be borne out by evidence from other Catholic societies. Cooperation thrived as well in the Lutheran societies of Nordic Europe as it did in the Catholic Habsburg lands and in the Basque country where the famous Mondragon co-operative was founded by a Catholic priest.⁸³ Far more important, according to O'Rourke, was the greater political and cultural homogeneity in Denmark after 1864.⁸⁴ But this seems to

Gouriévidis, *The dynamics of heritage: history, memory and the highland clearances* (Farnham, 2010), pp 34–5.

⁸⁰ Eva Fernández, 'Trust, religion and co-operation in western agriculture, 1880–1930' in *Economic History Review*, lxxvii, no. 3 (2014), p. 695. In order to assure comparability of statistics across so many cases, Fernández uses the percentage share of production and marketing of agricultural products accounted for by co-operative societies, rather than the number of societies or membership.

⁸¹ Cf., however, Liam Kennedy, 'Aspects of the spread of the creamery system in Ireland' in Keating (ed.), *Plunkett and cooperatives*, pp 92–110, who notes that the highest concentration of co-operative creameries was in Munster and Ulster, casting doubt on the notion of a link between religion and cooperation.

⁸² Ó Gráda, 'Irish agriculture', p. 144. See also Liam Kennedy, 'The early response of the Irish Catholic clergy to the co-operative movement' in *I.H.S.*, xxi, no. 81 (1978), pp 55–74. Kennedy suggests that priests often found themselves caught between the farmers and the local traders, who were overwhelmingly hostile to co-operatives. In an attempt to smooth relations, the I.A.O.S. published an exchange of letters between Plunkett and John Joseph Clancy, bishop of Elphin (*Irish Times*, 13 June 1908).

⁸³ On Mondragon see Fernando Molina and Antonio Miguez, 'The origins of Mondragon: Catholic co-operativism and social movement in a Basque valley (1941–59)' in *Social History*, xxxiii, no. 3 (2008), pp 284–98; on the Greek Catholic Church and co-operatives, see Piotr Wawrzenuk, 'Salvation and deliverance: the Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian co-operative movement as agents of modernisation in Galicia, 1899–1914' in Hilson, Markkola & Östman (eds), *Co-operatives and the social question*, pp 103–20; on Catholicism and cooperation, see also Susan Fitzpatrick-Behrens and Catherine C. LeGrand, 'Canadian and US Catholic promotion of co-operatives in central America and the Caribbean and their implications' in Mary Hilson, Silke Neunsinger and Greg Patmore (eds), *A global history of consumer co-operation since 1850: movements and businesses* (Leiden, 2017), pp 145–75.

⁸⁴ O'Rourke, 'Culture, conflict and co-operation', pp 1357–79; idem, 'Late nineteenth-century Denmark in an Irish mirror: land tenure, homogeneity and the roots of Danish success' in John L. Campbell, John A. Hall and Ove Pedersen (eds), *National identity and the varieties of capitalism: the Danish experience* (Montreal, 2006), pp 186–9, 192–3.

be undermined by the case of Finland, which, as other articles in this special issue demonstrate, experienced (like Ireland) severe social and political strife in the early twentieth century. As Charles Gide had noted in 1926, cooperation was spread too widely over diverse human societies to be narrowly associated with any particular religion or culture and attempts to find general explanations for its success or failure are therefore difficult to sustain.

III

In the early part of the First World War, the Co-operative Reference Library in Dublin negotiated with Pellervo to publish an English translation of Hannes Gebhard's reference work on Finnish cooperation.⁸⁵ In his preface, the editor Lionel Smith-Gordon acknowledged the special significance of Irish cooperation for Finland, but also noted that 'so much has been accomplished ... that the pupils bid fair to become the teachers'.⁸⁶ Production of the book was complicated by the restrictions of wartime. It was intended that the approved manuscript would be shipped to Dublin via the Finnish butter exporter Valio's depot in Newcastle, but its dispatch was delayed by the inclusion of a map showing the Finnish co-operative societies, since it was thought to contain sensitive information and was thus censored by the Russian authorities before it left Finland. Eventually the book was published without the map, but Pellervo had further difficulties extracting their own copies from the Russian customs.⁸⁷

What are revealing, however, are the remarks in the preface suggesting that the publication was intended not just for Irish co-operators but for the 'English-speaking world'. After the war, Plunkett's attention turned away from Ireland and the co-operative organisation to which he gave his name (the Plunkett Foundation) and he became associated with initiatives to promote agricultural cooperation in the rest of the British Empire.⁸⁸ In 1925 Hannes Gebhard was invited to join the Plunkett Foundation but declined, on the grounds that he would prefer to continue to work for co-operative interests in Finland, 'rather than for your Foundation working solely for the benefit of the wealthy British Empire'.⁸⁹

The significance of the Irish co-operative movement has been reappraised in recent research. Patrick Doyle's 2013 doctoral thesis shed new light on the role of the co-operative movement in the remaking of Irish nationalism after

⁸⁵ Hannes Gebhard, *Co-operation in Finland*, ed. Lionel Smith-Gordon (London, 1916).

⁸⁶ Gebhard, *Co-operation in Finland*; editor's note, p. viii; also cited in Hilson, 'Transnational networks', p. 96.

⁸⁷ Pellervo (Gebhard) to the Co-operative Reference Library (C.R.L.), Dublin, 16 Dec. 1914, 28 Apr. 1916; C.R.L. (Lionel Smith-Gordon) to Gebhard, 27 Mar. 1916, 29 Nov. 1916, 25 May 1917; Williams and Norgate to Pellervo, 27 June 1917; Pellervo to Williams and Norgate, 28 June 1917 (Pellervo, *Ulkomaankirjeenvaihtoa, 1911–1925*). See also Hilson, 'Transnational networks', pp 95–6.

⁸⁸ Rita Rhodes, *Empire and co-operation: how the British Empire used co-operatives in its development strategies, 1900–1970* (Edinburgh, 2012), pp 70–1, 171–92; Plunkett Foundation website (<http://www.plunkett.co.uk/aboutus/history.cfm>) (17 Apr. 2015).

⁸⁹ Hannes Gebhard to Horace Plunkett Foundation, 16 Jan. 1925 (K.A., HGN arkisto, microfilm PR91).

Parnell, even to the extent that it became linked to radical separatist nationalism after 1916. As Doyle notes, cooperation was referred to in the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil in 1919 and had become part of Sinn Féin's vision for a new Ireland.⁹⁰ But these aspirations were much harder to realise, perhaps because the co-operative movement also found it difficult to shake off its lingering associations with constructive unionism. Local conflicts as a result of the English Co-operative Wholesale Society's attempts to operate its own creameries had also helped to tarnish the image of cooperation.⁹¹ In Finland, the co-operative movement carried no such colonial baggage. Moreover, it is possible that its split into two separate factions in 1916 helped to shield it during the Civil War and its aftermath, since both sides of the social and ideological divide could claim cooperation as their own. More research is still needed on the experiences of co-operatives during the periods of conflict in both Finland and Ireland, especially at a grassroots level.

⁹⁰ Doyle, "Better farming", pp 147–8. See also Nicholas Allen, 'A revolutionary co-operation: George Russell and James Connolly' in *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua*, iv, no. 3 (2000), pp 46–64.

⁹¹ Jenkins, 'Capitalists and co-operators', pp 100–03; Doyle, "Better farming", pp 80–7. On the C.W.S. in Ireland, see also John F. Wilson, Anthony Webster and Rachael Vorberg-Rugh, *Building co-operation: a business history of the Co-operative Group, 1863–2013* (Oxford, 2013), pp 127–30. This article draws on research carried out as part of a larger research project on the history of the co-operative movements in the Nordic countries, begun during a period as visiting researcher at the Centre for Nordic Studies, Helsinki University, supported by the Nordic Centre of Excellence NordWel. The present article arose out of collaborative work with Pirjo Markkola and Ann-Catrin Östman. Thanks also to Johanna Rainio-Niemi, Andrew Newby and the anonymous referees of *Irish Historical Studies* for their helpful comments.