



Union Co-ops UK

Working Together on integrated solutions for
precarious workers

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Precarious Workers in the UK

Precarious Workers: 7.1 million (one in five)

Casual/agency workers - 730,000 (paid 40% less than average workers)

Zero-hour contract workers - 10-fold plus increase since 2006 - from 70,000 to 810,000

Self-employed - 1.7 million earn less than minimum wage

Self-employed - 3.7 million are in poverty

Gig economy workers: 1.1 million freelancers and expanding into all industries

Trade Union and Co-op Innovations

Ways forward set out in Working Together report

1. Freelance Co-operatives and UK Trade union partnerships
(e.g. Actors, Educational Psychologists, Musicians, Taxi drivers)
2. Business and Employment Co-operatives (France and Belgium) - online and back office services
3. Solidarity Co-operatives (Italy, Quebec and France)
4. Union Co-operatives (USA emerging - UK in planning)

Freelance Co-ops

What joint services with trade unions are needed?

- Solidarity and social interaction
- Advice, legal guidance and Representation
- Back-office: Invoicing, Credit Control, Tax, etc.
- Marketing
- Discounts: Insurance, vocational education, etc.
- Contracting collectively
- Platform services: WorkerTech
- Co-working - Shared space and/or tools

Actors Co-op Network - CPMA



Incorporating the Variety Artists' Federation

- Co-operative Personnel Management Association
- Founded in 2002 with the support of Equity
- 30 member Actors Co-operatives across UK
- Regular input into the development of Equity agreements and are consulted by Equity on industry issues.
- The CPMA is also represented on major working parties about future plans in different areas of employment with Equity and the PMA.
- <http://cpma.coop>



Established 1977, Oren Actors' Management is the longest running actors' agency in Wales. Oren provides actors for television, film, radio, theatre and commercials throughout the UK and abroad.

Taxi Co-ops



CENTRAL TAXIS

- In Edinburgh the taxi business is dominated by two taxi co-operatives, **City Cabs** (established 1925) and **Central Taxis** (1971). City has 400 members and 1,100 registered drivers, whilst Central has 400 members and 1,300 registered drivers.
- The number of licensed cabs is strictly regulated in Edinburgh and both co-operatives work closely with Unite to negotiate with the City Council over rates and licence conditions. <http://www.citycabs.co.uk/about>
<https://www.taxis-edinburgh.co.uk>



- The **Green Taxi Cooperative** in Denver, is a co-operative that is unionised. Founded in response to the "Uberisation" of the taxi market in Denver, after one year Green Taxi Cooperative had 800 drivers, from 37 different nationalities. With a market share of 37%, Green Taxi is the second largest worker co-operative in the United States. <http://greentaxico-op.com>



Évolution du chiffre d'affaires de la coopérative



- Established in 2004, and operating from 10 locations across France
- Coopaname has around 850 members; craftspeople, freelancers and service providers, at various stages of development of the economic activities, that they support, alone or in co-operative groups.
- <http://www.coopaname.coop>

SMart Belgium

How does the SMart Co-operative work?

SMart has designed a co-op system to give precarious, intermittent workers (who manage their own career paths in direct contact with customers or outsourcers) **access to salaried legal status**

Offers workers the opportunity to build or **preserve their social rights by allowing them to obtain the benefits** usually reserved for employees (such as for example access to unemployment benefit)

Offers a range of **back office services including contracting, Invoicing, payment collection and debt collection**

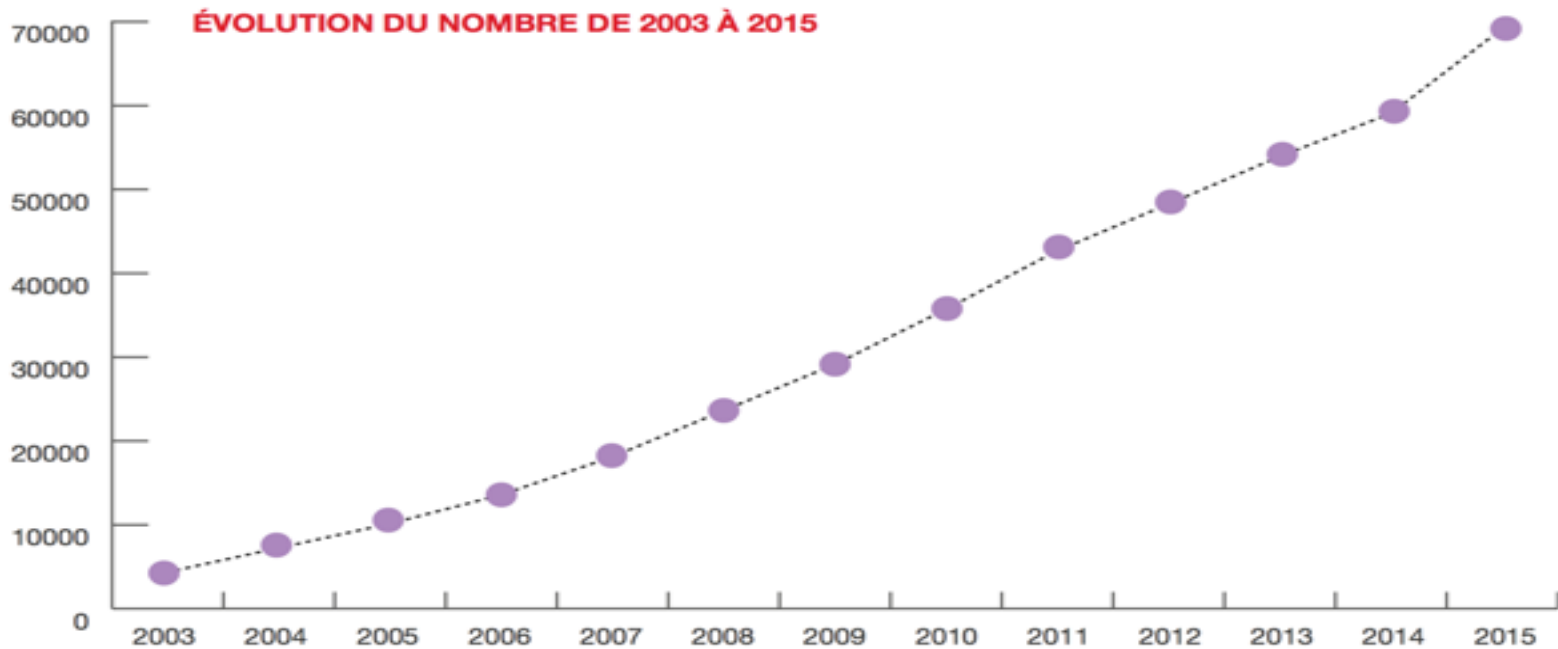
Guarantees payments to members and pays them within 7 days

SMart Belgium



- SMart has six co-working spaces across Belgium
- La Vallee, once a laundry, is the largest and newest, and has 60,000 sq ft of space to rent

SMart Belgium



MEMBERSHIP

- Membership has grown steadily over the years to around 85,000 members in Belgium at the end of 2017, plus around a further 20,000 plus across Europe.

Solidarity Co-ops in Italy

1. Pioneered in Italy from the 1970s for **worker buy-outs, social care, community health, education as well as jobs for disadvantaged workers** (ex-offenders, the disabled and those recovering from addiction)
2. **24,000 worker and social co-ops today** - worker and multi-stakeholder (worker and service users)
3. **National Trade Union agreement**
4. **826,000 jobs, 5 million service users for social co-ops and over €41 billion annual turnover** (across worker and social co-op sectors)
5. **Public-co-op partnerships** developed with many local authorities
6. **Fair trade promotion** for social co-op jobs for ex-offenders, the disabled and jobs created on reclaimed mafia land (Terra Libera) - organic wine, honey, beer, pasta, olive oil, mozzarella cheese and agritourism.

<https://liberaterra.it/en/products-organoleptic-profile/>

Union Coops - What are they and why have they emerged?

- Unionised worker co-ops emerged in the USA
- Response to the 2008 financial crash and inequality - the wealthiest 10% own 70% of the wealth
- Response to trade union decline
- Response to the race to the bottom: fragmented, casualised working
- Desire to keep things local!



Union Co-ops and 1-1

Started with a partnership between the United Steel Workers and Mondragon Co-operative in Oct 2009.

www.1worker1vote.org are now supporting the process in partnership with Mondragon International North America and other Unions.

Together they are building a national network of unionised worker-owned co-operative businesses to overcome inequality of opportunity, mobility and income.

Working across 10 cities:
Cincinnati, Pittsburgh,
Buffalo, New York City,
Denver, Las Vegas, Reading,
Pennsylvania, Chicago, San
Francisco-Oakland, St.
Louis



Union Co-ops

1:1 Participating Labor Unions

- United Steelworkers (USW)

www.usw.org

- Service Employees International Union (SEIU) <http://www.seiu.net>

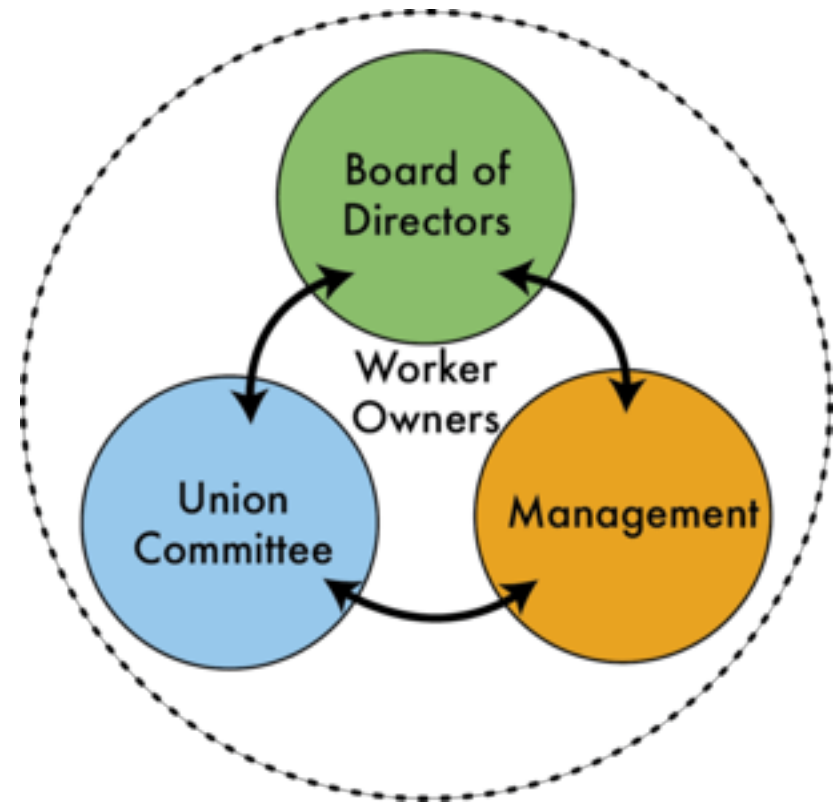
- United Food and Commercial workers (UFCW) <http://www.ufcw.org>

www.ufcw.org

- International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) <https://www.iuoe.org>

www.iuoe.org

- International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) <https://www.goiam.org>



Benefits

Trade Union benefits to a worker co-op?

- Employment law & industrial relations
- Health & Safety
- Pensions
- Policies and procedures
- Industry knowledge
- Contacts, relationships & lobbying

Benefit to workers in a union/worker co-op?

- Collective bargaining
- Representing both worker/owners interests
- Dispute resolution i.e. grievance etc.
- Disciplinary representation
- Education and training
- Benefits and services
- Raising social awareness/political education

Union/co-ops benefit to Trade Unions?

- Front door access to enterprises/ members
- Recognition from day 1
- Ability to organise and recruit
- Membership growth
- Partnership working
- In the main, positive industrial relations
 - ability to focus elsewhere





The [Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative](#) (CUCI) emerged in the wake of the agreement between Mondragon and the United Steelworkers, North America's largest industrial union, to launch union-co-operatives in the United States.

The agreement opened the door for CUCI to create jobs that are family / community supporting and improve the local economy in the Greater Cincinnati area.

Pro-community and non-extractive investment and anti gentrification strategies. Part of an anti-poverty alliance.

CUCI Union/Co-op Symposium, December 2017



Barriers

- Historical ambivalence between the two traditions
- TU bureaucracy
- Failure to perceive a role for the TU in a worker co-op - If it's our enterprise, why do we need a TU?
- UK context favours social enterprise model
- Small 'c' conservatism of worker co-ops. Are worker co-ops risk averse?
- Lack of examples and a model



Questions?

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