

# The Connection Between Cooperativism And Decent Work

Caroline Jacques, Max Richard Verginio, Dimas de Oliveira Estevam

## Abstract

*Cooperativism is based on the principles of cooperatives. They are applied, in practice, the cooperative values of free association and democracy for its members and are based on the fundamental rights. However, in the last two decades, in Brazil, the cooperatives began to hire workers on a low wage salary in a continuous and accelerated process. Taking into consideration that the hiring of workers by the cooperativism was not considered by its founding members, the formal hiring generated by cooperatives, all around the world, has increased. It is important to mention that the fundamental working rights notions started to exist due to the emergence of the concept of Decent Work. This concept was formalized by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1999, with the aim of promoting quality work opportunities, under the conditions of human freedom, equity, security and dignity. They are considered essential conditions for overcoming poverty, reducing social inequalities, guaranteeing democratic governance and sustainable development. In the research carried out in Brazil about this subject, it was identified that the employment opportunities generated by the cooperatives are closer to the concept of Decent Work when compared to those generated by the private sector. Thus, the present article aims to identify the connection between cooperativism and Decent Work through a bibliometric revision of literature. The methodological process used in the research was the bibliometric approach by applying co-word analysis. From the results obtained, it was not possible to establish a direct connection between cooperativism and Decent Work. Nevertheless, the connection was identified indirectly in the articles that focused on this theme. Even though, the focus was on the associated membership and not on the hired employees.*

**Keywords:** Cooperativism, decent work, Bibliometry.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This article is part of an ongoing research which is being conducted by the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Socioeconomic Development, Family Farming and Rural Education (GIDAFEC / UNESCO / CNPq) that is part of the Graduate Program in Socioeconomic Development (PPGDS) of the Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense (UNESC), based in Criciúma (SC). GIDAFEC conducts research on family farming and cooperativism, mainly involving aspects of collective production, decent work, gender inequality in labor, innovation, among others.

Research on cooperativism normally uses concepts of the double dimension of the cooperative and the double quality of the associate. The first one refers to the economic and social aspect, and the second one to the associate, who is both owner and user of the cooperative. The present study seeks to analyze another characteristic of current cooperativism, increasingly present in the activities performed by cooperatives: the salaried worker.

The data observed in the Annual Report on Social Information (RAIS), in recent research, indicates that there is a significant increase in employment in cooperatives in Brazil. Especially in sectors such as credit, health insurance, hospital services and rural energy services, among others. Even in critical periods, when the national macroeconomic scenario was marked by a downturn in the economy, the job creation balance in cooperatives were positive from 2002 to 2017. However, in the crisis of 2008 and 2015, job creation balance declined but were not negative as it was for private companies. That is, when analyzing the total generation of jobs in establishments of a legal nature equal to cooperative throughout the national territory.

It is important to point out that RAIS (Annual Report on Social Information) is the official employment control agency in Brazil. Registration controlled by RAIS covers only formal employment contracts, which are governed by the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT). Based on these records, it has been observed over the last decades that cooperatives have hired salaried workers in increasing and significant numbers. In a way, the hiring of workers by cooperatives was not considered by their founders of the cooperative movement; although it is currently a recurring phenomenon worldwide.

Within the hiring of salary workers by cooperatives, it is necessary to analyze the quality of the work generated. In order to carry out this research, the study was based on the concept of decent work formalized by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1999; whose objective is to promote opportunities for quality work, considering the conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, which are believed to be essential for overcoming poverty, the reduction of social inequalities, ensuring democratic governance and sustainable development.

It was found in the literature published in Brazil on this theme that the employment generated by the cooperatives are closer to the concept of Decent Work, when compared to the employment generated by the private companies. Therefore, the present article has as objective to identify the relationship between cooperativism and decent work in the scientific productions carried out in Brazil.

In addition to this introductory section, the article presents briefly the concepts of cooperativism and decent work followed by the methodology section. In order to reach the objective proposed a bibliometric analysis of publications on “cooperativism and decent work” was applied. After the methodology section, the results of the research are presented, followed by the final considerations.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Cooperativism is a secular movement and its modern format is based on the experiences of Rochdale pioneers in Manchester, England, in the beginning of 1844. The production scale, legal requirements, marketing competition demanded that the cooperatives as a social and economic movement, established principles that allowed cooperatives to maintain themselves in the market, without degenerating their bases. Since the beginning of cooperativism, it has in its identity the valorization of human dignity in the social and economic domain.

In order to connect the normative issues present in the cooperatives, with the fundamentals of human rights, Schneider (2017) makes this connection between cooperativism and human rights, with the following arguments: “cooperativism is the result of a consciousness will and collective action. It is an

organization to solve, in a balanced and fair way, the great challenges of survival in the area which is conflicting and full of contradictory interests, as it is the economic system.” (SCHNEIDER, 2017, p. 156).

The arguments on the employment of workers in cooperatives by the author above is related to the professionalization of management and the complexity of the services provided. In an increasing competitive market context, cooperatives are subject to the same regulations as other organizations, whether public or private. With the advent of increasingly complex regulations, the transaction cost of cooperatives has risen, making their operation impractical without hiring technical professionals. Even if the cooperative does not aim to generate profit, and the cost of social participation rises above the benefits achieved, it is unlikely that members will remain associated with a cooperative. Given that, the hiring of salaried workforce is related to providing greater efficiency in managing the costs of cooperatives, adapting their operating logic to the market.

When cooperatives are oriented to market efficiency, according to Bialoskorski Neto (2012), there are two possible forms of orientation for maximizing the welfare of members, through the provision of services or oriented towards the generation of financial surpluses and, later, redistribution between the associates at the end of the period. The orientation to the services provided has a short-term characteristic, while the generation of excedents, the benefits to the associates are not immediate. The author analyzes agricultural cooperatives in Brazil and concludes that the predominant characteristics are of the first type, that is, oriented to short term services. Moreover, the data collected shows the dimension of this type of management, in the state of São Paulo, the research showed that 72.73% of agricultural cooperatives capitalize the leftovers and do not distribute the economic results in cash to its members (BIALOSKORSKI NETO, 2012).

Cooperatives, whether oriented by short-term or long-term goals, produce positive results for its members. These results are partly related to the principles of cooperativism, which cooperatives must pursue. However, only a few results addressing the effects of these principles on workers hired by cooperatives were found. That is, those in which the relationship with the cooperative is not constituted as an associate, but as a salaried worker. If the results are positive for the members, little is known about the possible advantages to the workers hired by the cooperatives.

In order to measure the quality of work generated by cooperatives in Brazil, the application of the concept of decent work, coined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1999 seems appropriate. The concept is directly related to the minimum working conditions necessary to achieve workers' human rights (ILO, 1999; JACQUES et al. 2016, p. 168). In a more practical way, decent work can be defined as productive service, adequately paid, exercised under conditions of freedom, fairness and security, without any form of discrimination, capable of guaranteeing a decent life for workers, whether men, women, immigrants, or anyone belonging to ethnic minorities (JACQUES et al. 2016).

In an article published by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the organization warns about the risks in the alignment changes in macroeconomic policy, which are focused on monetary policies, pricing policies, fiscal austerity and labor flexibilization. This macroeconomic stance goes against the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which advocates full employment. However, among the ICA's proposals for governments are the active promotion of the cooperative model for the creation of wealth and

quality jobs at local, national and international levels, as well as changing the conditions of access to social protection policies beyond labor status, and strengthening of dialogue with unions (ICA, 2018).

The close relationship between cooperativism and the fundamental rights of the human beings can be identified, especially when it comes to labor. Moreover, the UN's 2030 agenda defines quality work as one of its objectives. Even though it makes no mention whether cooperativism is closer or not to the Agenda. ICA, the most representative body in the international sphere of cooperativism, stands in favor of the agenda goals at the UN and also demonstrates how cooperatives would be able to contribute positively to the future of work on a global scale.

According to the literature review in recent years, publications of scientific articles have grown significantly. Therefore, the importance of using tools aimed at analyzing large numbers of databases and bibliometric is one of them. Authors like Zupic; Cater, (2015), point out at least two main ways for the use of bibliometric research, to help new researchers to quickly understand the structure of a given scientific field and, or to introduce quantitative analysis in literature reviews.

However, among the risks that the researcher may encounter, in searching for concepts in scientific database search systems is finding studies that are not related to the area under research. That may lead to a larger sample in other areas, which may contribute very little for the ongoing research. As an example, recently a bibliometric analysis for the concepts of “cooperatives and sustainability” in the Web of Science database identified 792 works. Among the results found, 25.2% corresponded to environmental sciences and ecology, 15.7% to engineering. , 8.2% on Computer Science (BRIDI; MEDEIROS, 2018, p. 82).

Another way bibliometric analysis is being applied in Brazil is through studies that search through every publication of an electronic journal. Francisco (2011) made a bibliometric analysis of 240 articles from 2002 to 2010, from the REA-Eletrônica Business Administration Journal. The author complements his analysis with geoanalysis techniques and social networks in order to find the main influences on the journal or the most frequent concepts in the texts.

These are examples of how it is possible to work with bibliometric analysis using a large amount of information to identify the state of the art on the publications of a given theme. In this sense, the following presents the methodology to achieve the objectives outlined in the article.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

In order to achieve the research objectives, the methodological approach adopted in was searching through secondary sources in electronic available databases. The bibliographic sources for the research were selected in scientific bases. To assist in the treatment and cleaning of the data, the R language was used as an appropriate tool for the article object. The procedure applied was co-word analysis, which compares the terms that occur in the keywords, titles, abstracts, and even the body of the article.

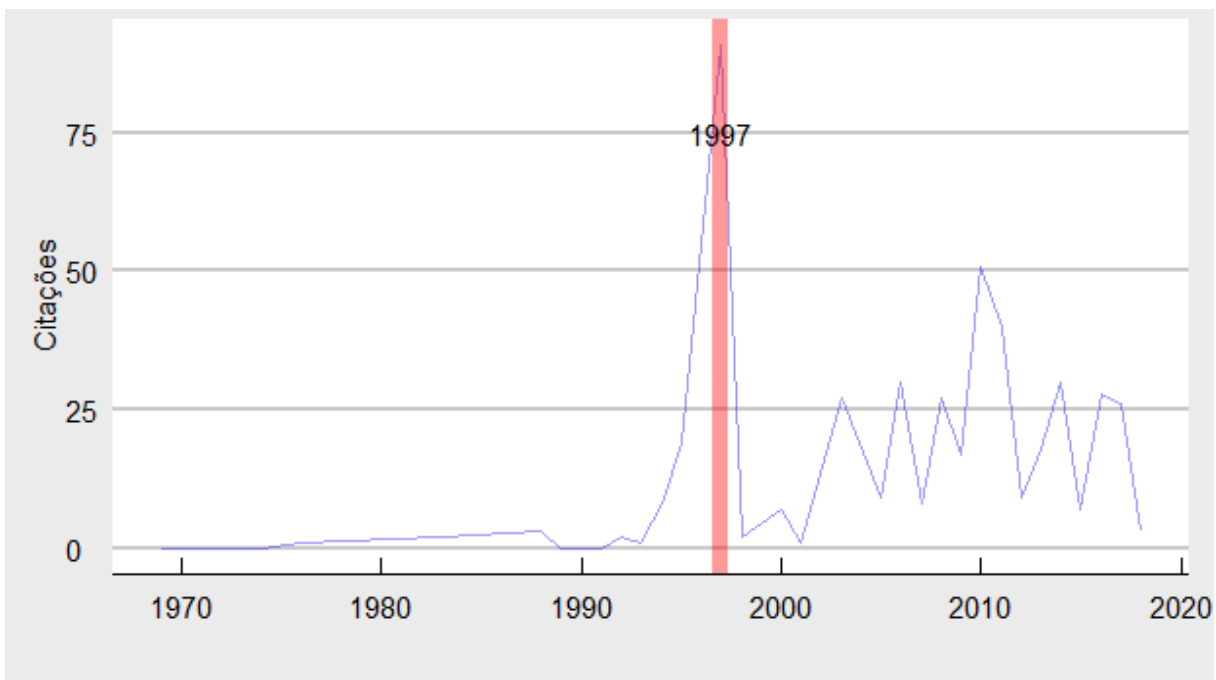
The data was analyzed using script prepared for bibliometric research in R language, with the aid of the Biliometrix package (ARIA; CUCCURULLO, 2017, p. 959). Bibliometrix which is a package for automating the stages of data analysis and data visualization.

#### 4 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The data source used was Scopus, due to the worldwide reach of the journals that are available in this system. This database makes it possible to import a large amount of information into the bibtex file format. The keywords used in the search were “*cooperativismo*” or “cooperativism” in order to limit the search results. By using the concepts of cooperativism, the objective is to reach studies which are related to cooperativism.

The descriptive analysis identified 168 scientific articles, 101 publication sources, 265 different keywords registered by the system and 481 keywords registered by the authors. The first publication found in the search is dated 1968, and the last one, 2018, with an average of 2.78 citations.

Figure 1 Citation rate per year

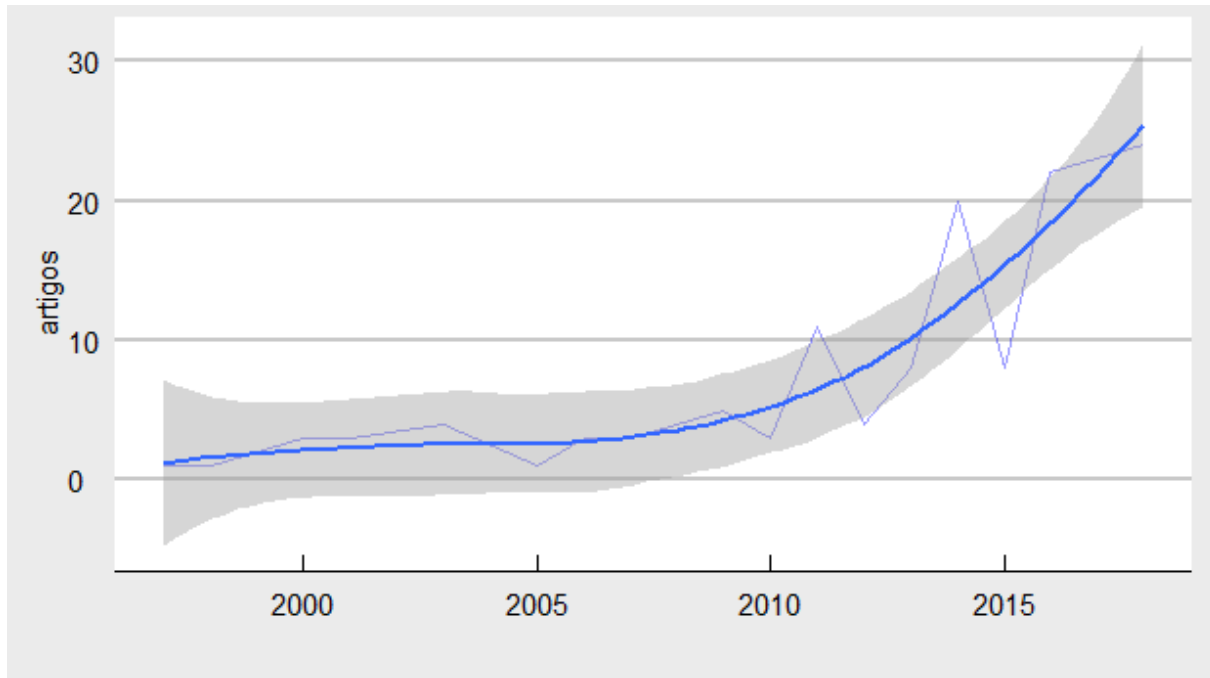


Source:

*Scopus, prepared by the authors of the article.*

Regarding the authorship, it was found in the research 268 authors, 302 appearances, 68 published individually, and 84 articles published by individual authors, and another 200 authors did not publish individually. The average article found was 0.627 articles per author, 1.6 authors per article, 1.8 co-author per article, summarizing a collaboration index of 2.38.

Figure 2: Scientific production on cooperativism by year 1997 to 2018

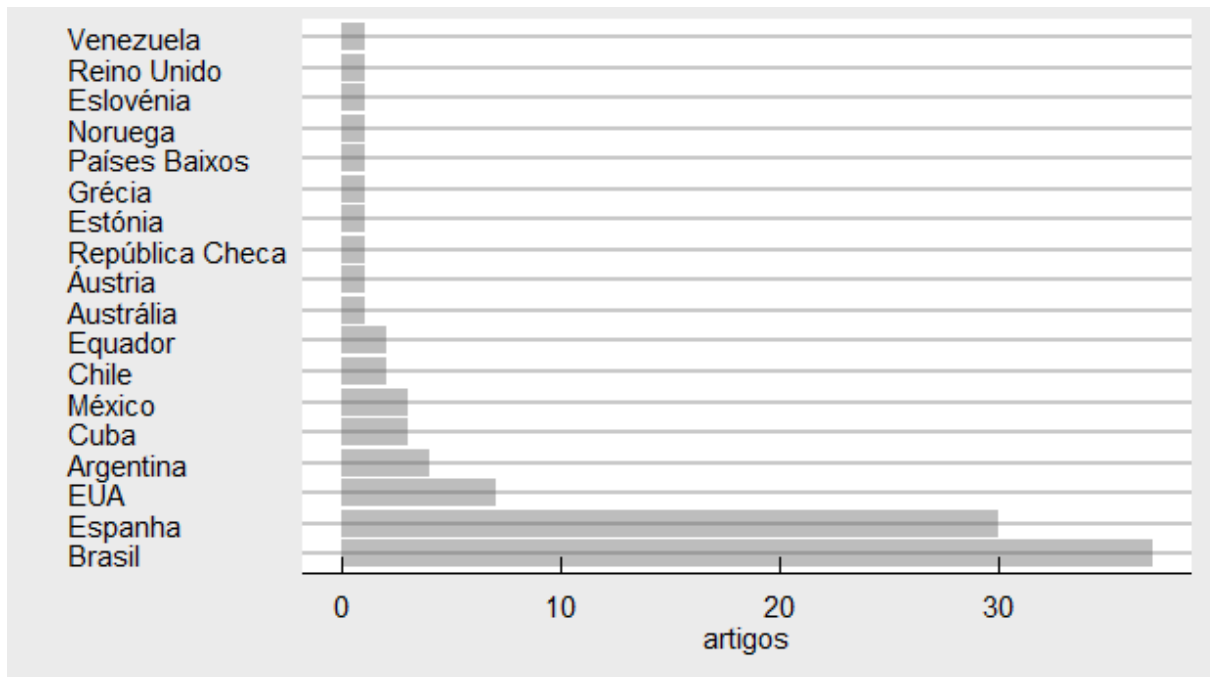


Source: *Scopus, prepared by the authors of the article.*

The first three decades analyzed, the production was sporadic, with intervals of eight years without publications. The academic production began to be constant, only from 1988, but limited to one or two articles per year. Except for 1995, when there were four publications. This pattern in publications continued until 1999, when there was an increase in the average for three annual publications from 2000 to 2007. From 2008, a cycle of increasing publications on the theme of cooperativism begins. In 2017 there were twenty-four publications, if considered the last six years, the average of publications were eighteen per year, using the keyword “*cooperativismo*” and or “*cooperativism*”.

The countries that presented the largest academic production on this theme were Brazil, with thirty-seven articles and Spain, with thirty-one articles. Argentina and the United States had 6 publications each. The intra-country (SCP) collaboration rate for Brazil is thirty-three, for Spain thirty-one, and inter-country collaboration (MCP) is four for Brazil and zero for Spain. This indicates low level of collaboration or relationship between research countries on the subject. The forms of collaboration or research networks are related to local researchers, with little or no link between international researchers.

Figura 3: Most productive countries



Fonte: *Scopus*, prepared by the authors of the article.

Although Brazil leads regarding the number of publications, articles published in the United States had the highest number of citations, one hundred and fifteen, with an average of 19.16 citations per article. Spain, with seventy-three citations, has an average of 2.34 citations per article. United States, which is third in publication, has forty-six citations from an article. Next comes Brazil, which has thirty-seven citations, with an average of one citation per article. Brazil and Spain are the countries that publish the most about the subject, however, the articles, when published by the United States, have a wider range, given the number of citations they receive.

There are two types of keywords in the Scopus database, the first one are the keywords registered by the authors, and secondly those that are added by the system operators. They aim to contribute to the academic scientific search, which are sought by the researchers. It is, therefore, a kind of categorization of the keywords of the authors.

It implies that authors themselves would have difficulty identifying the keywords that best rank their work. For example, in the following table the authors classified forty papers as “cooperativism”, twenty-seven as “cooperatives” and eleven as “social economy”; however, the system keywords are not concentrated, with five keywords in “ Cooperative sector ”, four in“ Agricultural cooperative ”and three in“ Agricultural history ”. A limitation of these indicators is that not all articles have the keywords registered, neither by the authors nor by the system operators. Among the articles, 16.2% had not registered keywords, while 78.6% of the articles had no system keywords.

The Co-word analysis tool visually represents the cluster of keywords, which are considered themes, where density and centrality are used to classify and map in a two-dimensional diagram. The thematic map is intuitive and can be analyzed according to four quadrants.

Table 1: thematic map analysis

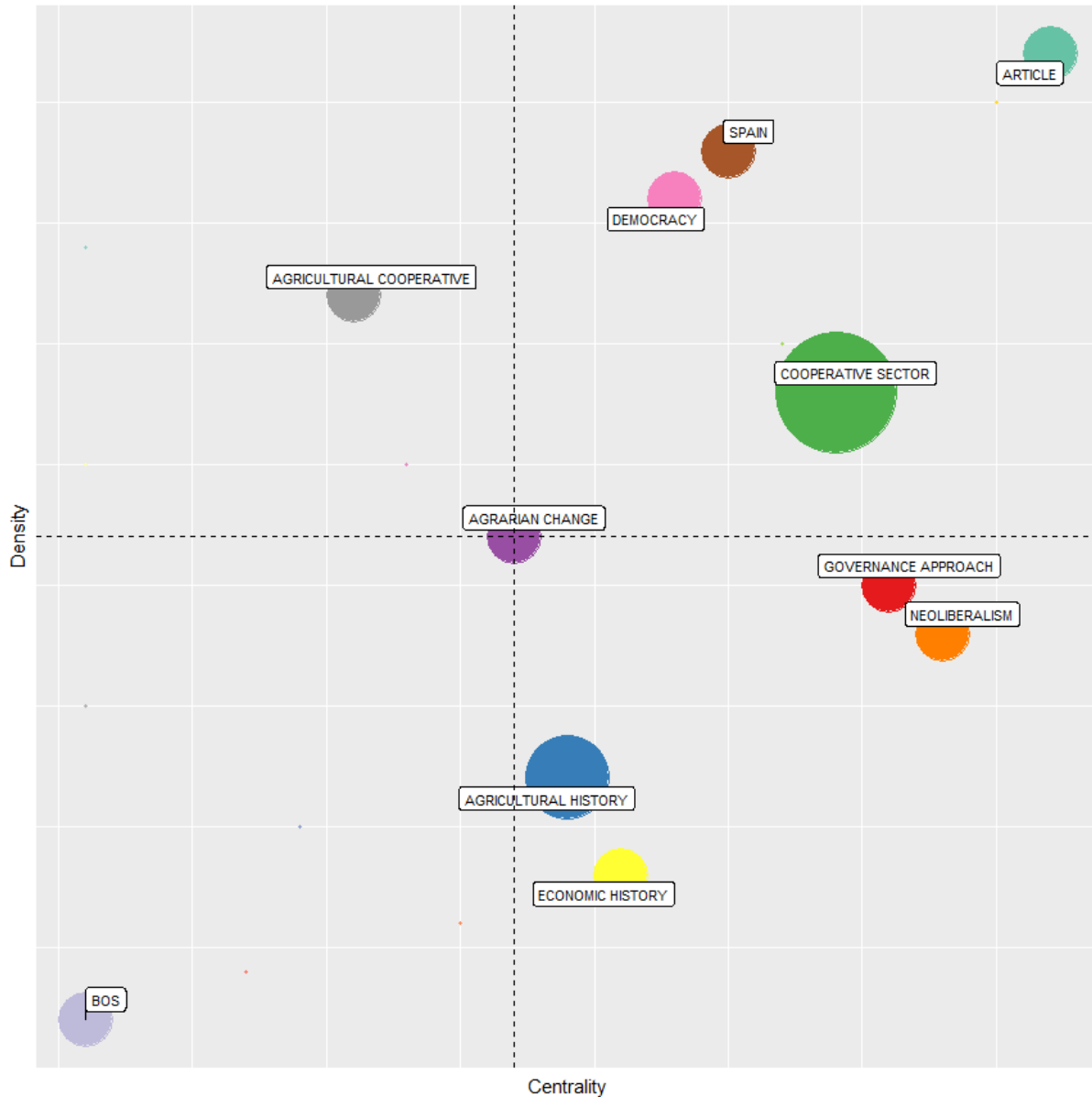
	<b>Quadrant</b>	<b>Clustering</b>
(1)	quadrant top right	motor-themes
(2)	quadrant bottom right	basic themes
(3)	quadrant bottom left	emerging or declining themes
(4)	quadrant top left	highly developed themes

Source: Bibliometrix – 2019.

According to the keyword analysis, the topics that are driving themes listed in the first quadrant are Democracy and the Cooperative Sector, as well as their relationship with Spain. In the second quadrant are considered basic themes: governance, neoliberalism, economic history and the history of agriculture. In the third quadrant there were no classified themes and in the fourth quadrant, which represents very specialized themes, cooperative agriculture. One theme could not be classified because it was right in the middle, among the four quadrants, which refers to agrarian changes.



Figure 4: thematic map



Source: *Scopus*, created by the authors of the article.

Bibliometrics approach offers an interesting tool for academic use, especially when the researcher is entering new research topics. The most appropriate instrument for analysis is defined in accordance to each situation. Therefore, in this sense, having knowledge about emerging ways of mapping the production of scientific knowledge can lead to new directions, promoting quality increments in scientific production. A necessary tool, I believe, mainly because time for scientific production is short and those who are new to research needs to gain knowledge about a certain field of research.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cooperativism has a history of academic publications. The theme is present in research and publications in high impact journals. In the last 10 years, there was an exponential increase of scientific

publications at the international level. It also occurred the increase of interest in cooperativism. Brazil has a key role in the scientific production on this theme. As well as Spain, due to the recognition of the Mondragon complex, which is a source of inspiration for cooperatives around the world.

Among the themes identified in the thematic map, appears prominently farming history, economic history and the cooperative sector. They are forms of approaching the research on cooperativism, which gives some hints about the strong connection that the cooperative sector has with or without the establishment of the economical and farming mindset at the moment.

There was no evidence of a direct connection between cooperativism and Decent Work in the articles researched. However, it was found an indirect connection as it was possible to identify a few articles that focused on the connection between cooperativism and human rights. However, the focus was on the workers associated to the cooperative. Thus, this connection would be through the approximation of the objects of research. Therefore, the analysis of employment generation in cooperatives based on decent work can be considered a good theme for future research.

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