



UK Society for Co-operative Studies 52nd Annual Research Conference

Friday 2nd – 4th October 2020

Hosted by: Lincoln International Business School, University of Lincoln,
Brayford Pool, Lincoln, LN6 7TS, UK

Submission deadline: 30th May 2020

The Politics, Policies and Practices of Co-operative Movements

Call for presentations, papers, panels and practical activities

Welcome to the UKSCS 2020 Annual Conference Call

Co-operative movements, even with agreed values and principles, have always wrestled with a wide range of political agendas, policy environments and (democratic) management practices. To create the agenda for this year's conference, members of the society participated in a democratic process at our AGM which developed and voted on key themes for the 2020 conference. In doing so, we considered feedback from the 2018 conference recommending fewer parallel tracks and larger discussion groups.

We invite you to submit proposals for presentations, papers, panels and practical activities that focus on the politics, policies and practices of co-operative movements. Your proposals can be oriented towards generating debates and engaging members, facilitating experiential learning activities or reporting the findings of research studies.

We particularly welcome contributions by practitioners who wish to share developments within their co-operative enterprise and/or network on:

- the emergence of new thinking
- how new thinking has been applied to accounting, management, marketing or governance in co-operatives
- how new practices have impacted on producer, worker and consumer members (and other stakeholders).

Professor Rory Ridley-Duff, Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Jan Myers, Northumbria University

Politics, Policies and Practices

In 2018, Lars Hulgard - President of the EMES International Research Network and a scholar of the Danish co-operative movement - argued that co-operatives have a double-edged and complicated relationship with politics. For many, co-operatives represent a viable strategy for advancing socialism 'from the bottom up', challenging dominant institutions through the development of grassroots commitments to anarcho-syndicalism (see Rothschild and Allen-Whitt, 1986). Seen from another perspective, the size, scale and financial success of retail and insurance co-operatives alongside control of co-operative movements by governments and political parties prompted Birchall (2012) to talk up the need for 'autonomy and independence' during the 1995 revisions to the International Co-operative Alliance statement on *Values and Principles*. It was, he argued, a strategy to avoid the co-option of co-operatives and co-operators into business projects and political agendas hostile to co-op members' interests.

In 2019, the UK Labour Party promised to double the size of the co-operative economy. The Conservative Party Manifesto was silent on the question of co-operative development. As the Italian experience has shown (Restakis, 2011), policies for co-operatives by governments can promote and shape their development. However, political parties are not the only sites for discussing the politics and policies of co-operative movements. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported in 2015 that it had persuaded 33 countries to adopt Recommendation 193 on the promotion of co-operatives since 2001. During follow up studies, numerous capacity building projects were found within and beyond these 33 countries.

In 2012, the International Co-operative Alliance reset the policy landscape for co-operative development when it published a *Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade*, and then committed in 2015 to supporting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. In Europe, CECOP continues to produce bulletins and reports on co-operative responses to non-standard employment and to lobby for inclusive social economies that embrace co-operative solutions. In the UK, Co-ops UK has established The Hive with the Co-op Bank to provide advice to start-ups, established and converting co-ops. These 'old' players are being joined by a string of new actors such as social.coop, Principle 6, Radical Routes, Solidfund, STIR Magazine and the FairShares Association who are establishing educational curricula based on changed thinking to support new co-operativism.

The practices of co-operatives are changing with the rise of web-based solutions for collaboration and decision-making. From the Platform Co-operative Movement championed by Trebor Scholtz to unfound.coop in the UK, the technologies of the sharing and collaborative economies are being reinvented and re-engineered to support new co-operativism. Whether it is the music streaming services of resonate.is, the FairBnB challenge to Airbnb or NESTA's initiative to replace Uber in London with a driver-owned taxi co-operative, the practices of running a co-operative are changing. Decision-making software created by the worker co-op Loomio shows that the corporate stranglehold on ICT solutions is not unbreakable. And whether co-operatively or corporately owned, ICT software is bringing down the cost of organising workplace democracy, which inevitably makes worker and solidarity co-operatives more viable and attractive. How will existing co-operative management practices survive, change and adapt to these challenges?

For this year's conference, we call for presentations, papers, panels and activities that advance members' knowledge of the connections between the politics, policies and practices of co-operatives. We invite contributions that explore the character and identity of co-operatives, and their links to social, economic and political thinking. How do these linkages manifest today and shape members' participation in management?

Tracks in the UKSCS 2020 Conference

This year, and the UK SCS AGM, members followed a five-stage process to democratically validate the agenda for the conference. Members prioritised three areas for discussion, as described below:

T1 – Co-operatives, Capital and Accountability

The first track is focused on the relationship between capital and co-operation. The following questions are not exhaustive, but these questions were selected by members to advance knowledge and practice:

- 1) How is (financial) capital raised by co-ops?
- 2) How is (financial) capital retained by communities?
- 3) How do mutual (self-help) organisations approach the accumulation and deployment of (financial) capital locally, regionally, nationally and internationally?
- 4) What accounting/accountability models exist for social and financial reporting?
- 5) How can members organise social auditing and social performance reporting for internal stakeholders and wider society?
- 6) What can we learn from history (such as reflections on the CWS) and subsequent changes in the way today's co-op use/access capital?

T2 - The Policies and Politics of Co-operatives

The second track covers the role of government and political parties/movements in supporting co-operative development. Here are questions members selected for this conference to answer:

- 1) Where and what does the sector want to develop?
- 2) On what terms should access be granted to state resources?
- 3) How is the nature of work changing?
- 4) How should co-operatives respond to the nature of labour in contemporary society?
- 5) How can co-operatives get policy makers to implement proven good practice?

T3 – What Works (in a co-operative)

The third track is oriented towards the identification of effective co-operative practices:

- 1) What best practices can be found in real life co-operative examples?
- 2) What works in (and for) co-operatives? (i.e. what should they do, and who should they do it for?)
- 3) How might we study/reapply the transformative aims of the Rochdale Pioneers/Owenites vision of a co-operative commonwealth (Principles 6 and 7)?
- 4) What can be learnt from 150 years of Co-ops UK efforts to promote Principle 6?
- 5) How can young people be persuaded to form co-operatives rather than (other) enterprises?

T4 – Open Track

If your proposal for a presentation, paper panel or practical activity does not fit naturally into one of the above tracks/themes, then you can submit it to the Open Track. This will give you the maximum flexibility to make a presentation, discuss work or arrange impromptu discussion throughout the conference.

Fees

Conference fees for members/non-members will be confirmed when we open the website for registration.

Bursaries for unwaged members

We have a £1,000 fund to support unwaged members (including PhD students). Please write to membership@ukscs.coop to apply for bursary to cover conference registration fees.

Accommodation Options

The hotels close to the conference venue recommended by the university are Holiday Inn Express (opposite the Business School) and Doubletree Hilton. Any further options will be confirmed when we open the website for registration.

How to make submission to UK SCS 2020

We welcome proposals from both scholars and practitioners engaged in the study of co-operative movements. Please create an abstract (maximum 750 words) that proposes a presentation, paper, panel or practical activity and submit it by **30th May 2020**.

Submissions are made online at:

<http://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=2020ukscsconference>

- If you have submitted previously, login with the same account details.
- If you are submitting for the first time, click 'Create an account' and follow the instructions to confirm your account.
- After logging in or registering your account, choose 'Enter as an author' to make a conference submission.

Fill out the contact details for presenters/authors, provide a title, abstract and keywords. At least one presenter/author will need to register for the conference for the submission to be accepted. Please do not submit a proposal if you have no plans to attend the conference.

Key Dates

Deadline for Proposals (Abstracts): 30th May 2020

Notification of Acceptance: 1st July 2020

Opening of Registration: 1st July 2020

Final Registration Date (with conference dinner): 25th September 2020

Final Registration Date (without dinner): 1st October 2020

Abstract format (suggested):

Please organise your proposal/abstract so that it provides details that can be peer-reviewed (maximum 750 words):

- Title (for your presentation, paper, panel or practical activity)
- Corresponding author
- A short statement about the issue/question your submission addresses
- A summary of the approach you are taking to study the issue/question you raise
- A summary of your findings and/or contribution to knowledge
- References to previous papers/studies (max 6)

If you wish to upload a full paper with your abstract, set the filename to:
UKSCS2020-FirstAuthorName-StreamNumber-SubmissionType.pdf

Examples

UKSCS2020-Myers-T2-Paper.pdf

UKSCS2020-Bickle-T3-Presentation.pdf

Indicative programme

Friday 2nd October

- Board/Member Meetings
14:00 – 16:00 UKSCS Board Meeting
16:00 – 18:00 UKSCS AGM
16:00 – 17:00 Chair, Financial, Member and Journal Reports
17:00 - 18:00 Strategy Development/Learning Activity with Members
- Start of Research Conference (open to non-members)
18:00 Registration, Welcome and Opening Plenary
18:30 – 19:30 [Opening Plenary Topic, Speaker, Film, Discussion?]
19:30 - late Social Event (organised by Lincoln Co-op?)

Saturday 3rd October

- 09:00 - 10:00 Main conference registration
- 10:00 - 11:15 Conference Opening & Keynote 1
[Nick's Guest from US]
- 11:15 – 11:30 Break
- 11:30 – 13:00 Parallel sessions
- 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch
- 14:00 - 15:00 Conference Keynote 2
- 15:00 - 16:30 Parallel sessions 2
- 16:30 - 17:00 Tea/coffee
- 17:00 – 18:30 Parallel sessions 3
- 20:00 – 22:00 Formal dinner (Venue TBC)

Sunday 4th October 2020

- 9:30 - 10:30 Parallel Sessions 4
- 10:30 – 11:30 Parallel Sessions 5

11:30 – 11:45 Tea/Coffee

11:15 – 13:00 Closing Plenary

13:00 - 14:00 Packed Lunch and Close of Conference

The Open Track can accommodate late submissions, impromptu panels or creative approaches to studying.