

**Sustainable development through social enterprise,
co-operative and voluntary action**

JOURNAL EDITORS' DEBATE

**Social enterprise, co-operative and voluntary action journals
bridging or dividing the field?**

June 25 2019, 4.30-5.30

Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom

To stimulate a vibrant debate amongst the editors of journals contributing to our field at the EMES conference, we asked each of them to provide a one-page statement about their journal, including a response to a question about how their journal contributes to bridging and dividing the field of SE. The purpose of the one page statements (and the wider debate) is to:

1. Learn about the breadth and depth of journals that contribute to our understanding of social enterprise, co-operative and voluntary action;
2. Explore the way each journal contributes to the study of sustainable development through different approaches to social enterprise, co-operative and voluntary action.

On the pages that follow, each representative of the journal's editorial board provide their statement. You can read these in advance of the debate and prepare your questions for the different journal editors.

Best wishes
Prof Rory Ridley-Duff
Session Chair

Social Enterprise Journal

Published by Emerald Publishing Ltd

Editor: Simon Teasdale

Associate Editor: Janelle Kerlin

Social Enterprise Journal was first published in 2005 as an initiative of Social Enterprise London. As such it was the first academic journal dedicated to the field of SE. Early articles in the journal were written by a mix of practitioners and (mainly) early career-academics together building the field of SE in the UK and internationally. Many of these early authors have become household names today, and have included Jacques Defourny, Marthe Nyssens, Alex Nicholls, Helen Haugh and Rory Ridley-Duff. The journal became part of Emerald in 2009 and quickly developed a more international focus. In late 2009 all of the articles published in Volume 5, Issue 3 were authored by academics from outside of the UK.

The field of SE is wide and diverse as the EMES conference will no doubt demonstrate. A particular strength is that it bridges different disciplines. Social Enterprise Journal is proud to reflect this inter-disciplinarity. We publish articles from academics located in, and influenced by, management, organisation studies, politics, social and public policy, geography, sociology and anthropology (to name but a few). We also welcome and encourage the adoption of a critical focus. While many of us seek to build the field of SE we also recognise that the interests of academic and practice-based fields are best served by rigorous and careful research, rather than articles that raise impossible expectations. The diversity of the field also extends to methodological approaches, with a plurality of methods and methodological innovation to the study of the field welcomed and celebrated in Social Enterprise Journal. We actively encourage authors to develop new combinations of methods from the exciting inter-disciplinary interface that the SE field has created.

As a journal we are keen to maintain close links with the SE field. We encourage academics to develop special issues on exciting new topics. These might be based around exploring SE in [new geographic contexts](#), from [different \(critical\) perspectives](#), as [part of networks](#), or [using different methodological approaches](#). Special issues currently in development include Social Enterprise and Health, and on Social Enterprises, Social Innovation and the Creative Economy. Special issues can be an excellent way to develop a new research agenda and form links with scholars outside of your immediate circle. If you have ideas for a new special issue, then please contact a member of Social Enterprise Journal's [editorial team](#).

Social Enterprise Journal has close links with the editors of other journals represented at EMES. Perhaps it is a consequence of the SE field that the relationships between different journals are marked by cooperation rather than competition, so many authors (and editors) publish and work across the different journals. Academics often hold editorial board positions at two or more of the journals. And citation analyses show that authors tend to see the different journals as together constituting a field. For example, Social Enterprise Journal citation rates show that more citations come from Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Voluntas than any other journals.

Of course the journals are all different, and as such prospective authors should think carefully as to where their article is most likely to be read and cited. Of course we at Social Enterprise Journal would argue (with considerable supportive evidence) that we are the best home for an article explicitly focusing on social enterprise. But the field of SE is strengthened by the diversity

and academic rigour of the journals represented at the EMES conference. It is in all of our interests that each of the journals prosper and that our field continues to develop.

Social Enterprise Journal has always been keen to promote the work of early career researchers. As mentioned above, for many it is a stepping stone to a successful academic career. Many of these researchers continue to publish in the journal, serve on the editorial board or lead special issues. Social Enterprise Journal continues to build the field of SE while seeking to accommodate and celebrate the divisions and diversity that spark innovation. We are proud to be part of this fantastic field and look forward to meeting you at EMES in Sheffield.

Journal of Co-operative Studies

Published by UKSCS (UK Society for Co-operative Studies)

Editor: Jan Myers

The *Journal of Co-operative Studies* celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017, having been set up to encourage discourse between practitioners in the co-operative sectors and academics as well as linking theory and practice through education and learning. It has remained loyal to those beginnings and is international in scope, content and ambition. As such, we publish a wide variety of articles and research papers focusing on different co-operative structures, processes of managing, collaborative innovation and sustainable business. Many articles discuss differing definitions of co-operatives, many with particular legal and regulatory forms, ownership characteristics and accountabilities that are different from non-profits, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises.

Some might argue that co-operatives are 'regulated social enterprises' (see, for example www.scoop.coop; www.blog.coop.uk) and it was a hotly debated issue at the 2016 UK Society for Co-operative Studies conference where on the one hand it was argued that "[a]ny co-op that delivers on all principles is a social enterprise because it embraces the concern for community" (Ridley-Duff), and "co-ops should be allowed to call themselves social enterprises by default" (Crowe). On the other hand, it was suggested that "[the co-operative movement has] lost confidence in our own business model" and "co-ops deliver not just for poor, but for the rich as well. The language of social enterprises is full of vacuums – it comes from the EU and the USA where it means something different and merged together into something where it doesn't mean anything" (Matthews – see Voineau, 2016).

Many social co-operatives and social purpose businesses deliver benefits for their members (as it can be argued so do trade unions and voluntary associations) and may be non-profit distributing. However, many co-operatives focus more on benefits attached to member economic participation and the commercial and business end of the social-economic continuum, including restricted profit distribution as well as promoting responsible and 'better ways of doing business'. Some would conclude (e.g. Birchall) that many co-operatives sit more comfortably in the private rather than public and non-profit sectors.

Accepting difference both across sectors as well as within the co-operative sector itself is of benefit in developing academic and practitioner discourse on organising and organisations. Accepting also diversity in the field of studies and in changing definitions, and new organisational forms – leaderless circles for social and political action for example – extends the discourse on non-mainstream concepts of operating and human activity. Co-operative studies represent a broad umbrella for working and living in collaboration and in community; in this sense it can be both social and enterprising.

Would *Voluntas* publish an article on a for-profit employee-owned organisation manufacturing white goods for international and domestic markets with a focus on member investment and equity? Probably not. Might the *Social Enterprise Journal* publish an article about a public service mutual – a spin-out from local government and registered as a community interest company to provide social care? Possibly. Would the *Journal of Co-operative Studies* – possibly if the focus was on mutuality and employee engagement, ownership and management.

While there may be common interests that span voluntary, social and co-operative enterprises

trying to tightly couple them denies the complexity of organisational structures, changes, arguments and debates that are discreet to a particular body of practice and academic research and discourse. We benefit from continued observations, accounts and learning from (shared and different) practices, from debates generated by continued attempts to define and describe. Our respective journals offer a specific space to continue to develop those debates that differentiate (sometimes divide) and also celebrate commonalities, but they also provide a dedicated space for, in our case, types of co-operation and co-operative organisations often neglected even in our own field of co-operative studies.

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly

Published by Sage Publications Ltd

Research-to-Practice Editor: Tracey Coule

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly is a flagship journal in the field. Established in 1972, it has transformed from a 'start-up' journal dominated by U.S. sociologists into a high-quality, multidisciplinary, globalized journal that receives over 600 submissions annually and benefits from a strong impact factor and ranking among social issue journals.

Our field of research is growing and changing rapidly. In particular, the landscape of academic publishing has become more crowded in recent years, with nearly 70 journals focusing on aspects of nonprofit and philanthropic studies, as well as substantial growth in publication of nonprofit-related articles in more traditional disciplinary outlets. *NVSQ* itself has seen increasing submissions focussing on hybridity, social enterprise, social innovation and alternative forms of organizing to the charity and nonprofit frames of reference that once proliferated.

We see such pluralism as a positive force; it contributes to field building and prevents the domination of particular discourses, meta-theoretical traditions and methodological monism. The shadow-side of the pluralism inherent in the field, however, is that specific journals can come to occupy both intended and unintended positions that limit their potential to bridge conversations in related research communities and publications. Conversations in institutional corridors can position *NVSQ*, for example, as an outlet dominated by North American scholars privileging "the scientific" (i.e. positivistic) method. This can be discouraging to junior scholars, non-U.S. scholars, and those scholars who undertake research from the full diversity of meta-theoretical and methodological approaches. Our reality is that half of *NVSQ*'s articles are contributed by researchers outside the U.S., the editorial board has strong representation from Europe and the U.K. and we made an explicit commitment to methodological diversity and working developmentally with junior scholars at the outset of our term as Editors-in-Chief.

The major risk as we see it, is not in dividing the field according to the 'type' of organization studied or activity undertaken (i.e. nonprofit, voluntary, social enterprise, social solidarity etc), but in dividing it through real and perceived biases towards particular geographies, knowledge constituting assumptions and modes of knowledge production on the part of publication outlets and editors. Avoiding such issues will take a concerted effort on the part of *NVSQ* and other field-specific journals to ensure we collectively provide space for the complexity, diversity and flux characteristic of our field.

Voluntas

Published by Springer

Editor: Taco Brandsen

International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations (Voluntas) is not exclusively focused on social enterprises, as the name suggests, but has in recent years published a substantial number of articles on social enterprises and related topics. In that sense, it has evolved from its origins as a journal focused primarily on volunteering and traditional non-profit organisations. This reflects the development of the field, in which the boundaries between market, state and civil society have increasingly become blurred.

Our position is simple: our journal should be a platform, not a pulpit. There is merit in building schools of thought, but for journals to enforce a rigid view of what its focus should be, or of what constitutes an appropriate methodological approach, is in the end counterproductive to the academic debate. It is exactly in cross-overs and conflicts that debate thrives.

This can be difficult to realise in practice, as not all reviewers are equally open-minded or objective, so here lies a clear challenge to editors. By maintaining a broad reviewer pool and by allowing sufficient room for disagreement between authors and reviewers, we try to prevent any position from becoming dominant. It also takes a deliberate effort on the part of editors to remain impartial, despite personal preferences. Building a largely self-referential community around a journal has the benefits of a clearer profile and perhaps higher citation scores. What with increasing numbers of submissions and the need to reject more articles, it becomes easier for biases to slip into the process. To prevent this, building a mixed editorial team and board can be beneficial.

In short, we do not aim for the predominance of one view, or even for consensus. If people disagree over the nature of social enterprises, let them fight over it, by all means. What matters is that they fight in one arena.

Review of International Co-operation

Published by the ICA (International Co-operative Alliance) Committee on Co-operative Research

Editorial Board Member: Roger Spear

Editor: Sonja Novkovic

The ICA Committee on Co-operative Research (CCR) coordinates the research activities of its networks in: Asia/Pacific, Europe, North America, Latin America, as well as its emerging network in Africa. It is responsible for editing and publishing the Review of International Co-operation which draws on a selection of papers from its regional and global conferences, but is also open to disassociate strictly from CCR conferences and produces issues dedicated to themes such as co-operative governance and finance. In 2017, it produced a volume dedicated to co-operative research in Latin America. The CCR may also engage in other (joint) publications on an ad-hoc basis.

a) What academic/theoretical issues have informed the journal's development?

The journal is an industry-friendly publication, aiming for a practitioner as well as academic audience. It is produced in-house by the ICA and has not held a consistent line on academic/theoretical issues over the years. It has filled different needs and played different roles at different times, often serving as a vehicle for conference proceedings. It is currently under review with a high probability that the journal will move to a publisher.

Some journal issues are organised around a theme. Others are organised around conference proceedings. Regardless of its continuation as an in-house or externally published journal, it should remain a publication intended for wider audiences. Indeed, one of its biggest attributes is a circulation to a wide international audience via the international cooperative alliance's global, regional, and sectoral networks. In this way, it aims to bridge academic research and practitioner knowledge.

b) What submissions is the journal actively seeking at present?

There is a call at the moment, edited by CASC (Canadian Association for Co-op Studies) that is open to guest editors - please send ideas.

c) What is the relationship of the journal (and academic community) to other journals and academic communities present at the EMES conference?

The journal serves as the ICA Co-operative Committee on Research outlet. It has connections to other audiences and journals (CIRIEC, Social Economy, EURICSE) mainly through individuals who belong to multiple organisations. There have been interesting comparative studies engaging plurality and diversity in the research outputs of researchers in our different regional networks. In particular, hybridity and isomorphism may be seen in the agricultural and financial services sectors whilst at the same time hybridity in a more social direction may be seen in social co-operatives (one of the types of social enterprise identified in the EMES ICSEM project). Due to the different patterns of evolution and growth, the governance of large co-ops offers a rich vein for research studies, and federal structures for co-operatives come in many diverse forms.

Journal of Entrepreneurial and Organizational Diversity (JEOD)

Published by EURICSE (European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises)

Editor: Carlo Borzaga

As the title suggests, since its inception in 2012, the aim of the *Journal on Entrepreneurial and Organizational Diversity* (JEOD) was to bridging and encompass the increasing variety of forms of enterprises: new cooperatives providing social services and work integration to disadvantaged people were emerging, traditional non-profit organizations such as foundations and associations were becoming more and more entrepreneurial and new legal forms were emerging in most countries. At the same time, traditional cooperatives continued to be important and growing in many countries and new forms of corporate social responsibility were adopted.

In the view of the founders, the best way to capture these new developments and sustain both academic discussion and public debate was to focus not only on social enterprises but more generally on all the forms of enterprise having an explicit social aim, featuring participatory and inclusive governance solutions, as well as on the relation between such organisations and instances of community development. In doing this, the journal was addressing the relationship between organisational diversity and the implications of different organisational forms on their environment, including implications for social, economic, and environmental sustainability. The editorial approach also considered this the best way to develop an innovative theoretical explanation of the emergence and consolidation of social enterprises and to distinguish them from conventional corporations.

To help the development of research on the evolution of the variety of entrepreneurial forms around the world the main interest of the journal is to give room to both theoretical and empirical papers. Manuscripts are blind peer-reviewed and two issues per year are published. The development of specific areas of interest is supported by an international network of scholars with different roles. Some operate as associate editors supporting the chief editors in ensuring new contents and academic standards, while others contribute from the scientific board, contributing to the debate around the development of the Journal.

Moreover, to spread the results of the growing amount of empirical research on the subject, JEOB has recently added two additional sections: Research proceedings – that hosts short reports whose aim is to support communication around work in progress as well as preliminary evidence from ongoing research projects; Conference letters - that gives space to short letters from conference participants, panel and conference chairs who wish to report and comment on new avenues of research that emerge from academic events.

JEOD has adopted an open access policy with the intention of ensuring access to fresh knowledge and debate to all publics. The diffusion among the interested researchers is supported by SSRN. Since the foundation the papers published in JEOB have been downloaded more than 6,000 times

Journal of Social Entrepreneurship

Published by Routledge

Editor: Alex Nicholls

(with apologies to the conference for non-attendance)

To date, much of social entrepreneurship scholarship has emerged from business schools and has, as a consequence, tended to focus on organizational, strategic, and financial issues. The perspective has largely been to use business models to explore social innovation, and particularly, social enterprise (social entrepreneurship that moves towards self-funding). The approach has largely been 'what can social entrepreneurship learn from business perspectives'. This is an important part of the scholarly picture, but the Journal of Social Entrepreneurship has a far broader remit.

In this journal, social entrepreneurship is defined as having four key components - sociality, innovation, market orientation, and hybridity. First, sociality is a focus on a defined social purpose or benefit to society that is carefully measured. This could be identifiable by organization type such as co-operatives or charities, or sectors, like healthcare or education. Second, innovation is seen as either creative or destructive changes to social or economic systems. Third, market orientation places social entrepreneurship in a broader competitive landscape of funding, outputs, accountability and legitimacy, all focused on a relentless effort to improve performance and increase social impact. Finally, social entrepreneurship is defined by its tendency to operate in hybrid spaces between the public, private/commercial and civil society sectors - often in the form of hybrid organizational forms such as co-operatives or social enterprises. This definition of social entrepreneurship includes both for and not-for-profit organizations, as well as public sector bodies. However, it excludes all organizations the primary purpose of which is profit-maximisation, irrespective of whether they also aim to do social good, as this falls under quite the separate heading of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Key areas of interest for the Journal to draw from, and explore relationships with, include social policy and political science; anthropology; sociology; not-for-profit management; finance; organizational theory; strategy; social geography; (development) economics; ethics and moral philosophy; and social psychology. However, the Journal is open to work in any scholarly tradition with the twin caveats that the work is squarely focused on social entrepreneurship, and that it is high quality.

The vision for the Journal is as a high quality, multidisciplinary publication that embraces and encourages work on social entrepreneurship from a range of scholarly perspectives beyond business and management and accepts that social entrepreneurship has much to offer the third and public sectors. The Journal is un-prescriptive with respect to methodology, accepting qualitative and quantitative work equally on merit. However, in order to build the academic credibility of social entrepreneurship, there is currently a need to move away from both descriptive case studies and individual 'hero' accounts of social entrepreneurs, so the Journal actively supports both theory-inflected work and broader empirical studies.