



PALGRAVE CRITICAL UNIVERSITY STUDIES



# Reclaiming the University for the Public Good

Experiments and Futures  
in Co-operative Higher Education

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*Edited by*  
Malcolm Noble · Cilla Ross

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# Palgrave Critical University Studies

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Malcolm Noble • Cilla Ross  
Editors

# Reclaiming the University for the Public Good

Experiments and Futures in  
Co-operative Higher Education

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# Foreword

Raymond Williams, the cultural critic and adult educator argued that adults turn to learning at times of change to understand what is happening, to adapt to it, and to shape it. There is no shortage of changes to confront currently—ecological, technological, demographic, and industrial—each with profound implications for the way we organise our lives together, and all of which necessarily involve engaging adults in collectively confronting how best we can frame a world worth living in. Yet opportunities to learn and reflect together on what needs doing and how best to do it have been reduced dramatically in recent years—as more than half the number of mature part-time students in English Higher Education have been lost in the last five years, and as two million students have been lost to further education since 2003.

At the same time there has been increased erosion of intellectual and organisational autonomy in higher education, the impoverishment of further education colleges overwhelmed by endless changes in regulatory expectations, and the reduction of education policy to a subset of economic policy. A neoliberal dynamic stalks the earth with universities challenged to compete in a competitive global market, managerialism rampant, working conditions eroded, and student experience of university measured through income earned in future jobs. Where, in all this, is there space for the kind of education for democracy and exploration of alternatives that is needed to support people in addressing our challenges?

This is the context that has given rise to this vibrant and creative set of chapters which offer a vision of an alternative, co-operative, higher education, dedicated to the public good. As Hannah Bland points out in her chapter the case made here for a co-operative university is situated in and against a problematic context. There is a common concern to recreate a community of scholars, with flat management structures, democratic decision making, a pedagogy co-produced with learners, and a concern to recognise that what we know together is more than the sum of what we know on our own. There is, too, a recognition that for the imaginative initiatives developed in Brighton, Lincoln, Oxford, Leicester, Glasgow, and Edinburgh to be sustainable, secure funding is needed as well as commitment and solidarity. In the international examples looked at, Mondragon solved that problem in part by reliance on the support of the range of co-operative enterprises in the Basque Country, but that is not an answer easily found in the UK. The Co-operative College's proposed solution is to take advantage of the English 2017 Higher Education Reform Act's provision for alternative providers of Higher Education to be publicly funded, and to offer a federated relationship with existing local initiatives and co-operatives to validate learner achievements. Of course, as the University Extra-Mural provision of the past century attests, not everyone seeking to explore effective democratic Higher Education wants their study to be limited by the constraints of certification, and a federated Co-operative Higher Education will want to accommodate their work alongside accredited provision.

As Tom Woodin's chapter makes clear, the Co-operative College has a rich vein of experience in collegiate, co-operative, and collaborative education, and a fair number of short-lived initiatives too. Yet as E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* showed, there is so much that can be learned and borrowed from such projects, however short-lived. There is much to recover too, from earlier co-operative educational practice. I have always been struck by the Co-operative Women's Guild's approach to developing their contributions to debates on suffrage and divorce law reform. Faced in their debates with strong majority views, and equally emphatic minority views, the Guild, under the leadership of Margaret Llewellyn Davies, developed public policy statements that reported both perspectives. That kind of respect for dif-

ference and divergent views would be of contemporary use in the aftermath of Brexit.

All in all, *Reclaiming the University for the Public Good: Experiments and Futures in Co-operative Higher Education*, is an absorbing and inspiring account of work to demonstrate, in the language of the World Social Forum, that ‘another world is possible’, one where education takes learners away from passive absorption to active problem solving, and where students and academics all bring knowledge and experience to the table to construct a learning agenda. And once the struggle to secure a co-operative alternative in Higher Education is established, I look forward to a companion volume, bringing the same flair and energy to reclaiming the further education college and adult education provision for the public good.

Wolverhampton, UK

Alan Tuckett



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**Sally Birch** is studying in her final year for a BA (Hons) in Art and Humanities. She organised and led a campaign to try to save the Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning in Leicester. She is passionate about transforming lives through education. Sally is married with two children and works full time as a Learning Behaviour Mentor in a SEMH (Social, Emotional, Mental Health) school in Leicester.

**Hannah Bland** Her interest in democratizing knowledge production comes from frustrations with her own experiences as a student in a traditional university coupled with an impatience for social change and a stubborn belief that education can and must play a role in bringing it

about. Her work is shaped by her affinity to critical anthropological, feminist and activist research traditions. Hannah was an active member of the Co-operative University Working Group and currently sits on the Interim Academic Board.

**Luke Devlin** is executive director of the Centre for Human Ecology, Glasgow, and a doctoral researcher at the Intercultural Research Centre, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. His work attempts to emphasize the interconnections between nature, culture, society and spirituality.

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**Pablo Perez Ruiz** has been involved with student co-operatives since 2014 through the Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative, the Swap and Reuse Hub Co-operative and the national network Students for Co-operation (SfC). In 2017, Pablo joined the Co-operative University Working Group as an SfC representative.

**Fenella Porter** is an activist and teacher in labour studies, development studies and women's rights, with 25+ years' experience working with women's organizations and movements, development non-governmental organizations, and trade unions at national and international levels. Her teaching work has concentrated on activist education, enabling and facilitating critical thinking for the broader purpose of social change. With former colleagues from Ruskin College and the Co-operative College, she is a co-founder of the RED Learning Co-operative (Research, Education and Development for Social Change).

**Cilla Ross** is an educator and work sociologist with a background in higher and alternative adult education. As vice principal of the Co-operative College Cilla has oversight of the triad of co-operative education, research and future thinking. Decent work, livelihood building and co-operative placemaking are priorities but wider research and practice includes radical education methodologies and research on the future of work. Most recently Cilla has been working on ways of challenging precarity through union co-ops, co-designing the first Co-operative University in the UK and devising projects which celebrate the Ministry of Reconstruction 1919 Report on Adult Education and consider its relevance for our time.

**Gary Saunders** is a scholar-activist at University of Lincoln whose research and practice focuses on critical and democratic pedagogical initiatives both inside and outside of mainstream higher education. Gary's doctoral thesis documents and critically reflects upon the creation and running of autonomous learning spaces that emerged in response to the UK Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government's reforms to higher education in 2010. Gary is also involved in the development and implementation of Student as Producer at University of Lincoln which is part of an attempt to engage academics and students in a way that is critical of current attempts to marketize and instrumentalize higher education by involving all in the pursuit of scholarship through collaborative curriculum design and academic research.

**Mike Shaw** is a network co-ordinator for Students for Cooperation. He became active in the co-operative movement through co-founding the Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative whilst studying maths and physics at the University of Edinburgh. He was also a trustee and elected officer for Edinburgh University Students' Association and active in the NUS, the National Campaign Against Fees, and Cuts and Edinburgh Uncut.

**Laura Stafford** is a full-time parent and part-time scholar, working on the fringes of the gig economy and attempting to participate in mass intellectuality.

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**Tracy Walsh** is a teacher and activist, starting her career in trade union education after studying at Ruskin College on a Unison scholarship. She is a doctoral researcher in the Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behaviour at University of Greenwich. Tracy is interested in working-class education, and with former colleges from Ruskin College

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**Tom Woodin** is a reader in the social history of education at the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education. He has researched and published widely on co-operatives and learning, including *Community and Mutual Ownership: A historical review* for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and edited the book *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values* published by Routledge. He also works on the history of education and is co-writing a history of the Co-operative College for Palgrave Macmillan. His most recent book is on workers' writing and community publishing, *Working-Class Writing and Publishing in the Late-Twentieth Century*. He co-edits the journal *History of Education*.



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# 1

## Now Is the Time for Co-operative Higher Education

Malcolm Noble and Cilla Ross

In 2018, the University of Leicester announced that its next Chancellor would be David Willetts.<sup>1</sup> For students and staff alike, it was hard to imagine a less appropriate candidate. The students' union organized a petition objecting to the appointment as the University's figurehead, a former minister responsible for £9000 tuition fees and notorious for comments around 'feminism and the increase in working women for

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<sup>1</sup> University of Leicester. 2018. Lord Willetts, former Universities and Science Minister, announced as new Chancellor of University of Leicester. <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2018/february/lord-willetts-former-universities-and-science-minister-announced-as-new-chancellor-of-university-of-leicester>. Accessed 28 March 2019.

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damaging the social mobility of working class men'.<sup>2</sup> When Willetts launched his book at the University the following week there were wide-scale protests. Yet even as a petition gathered thousands of signatures, this seemed to have no meaningful impact on the University's management.<sup>3</sup> This proved too much for many students and the occupation of the University's administrative buildings ensued, something not seen on that campus since the 1970s. All of this however had nil traction, and at the time of writing, despite his not having attended any graduation ceremony, Willetts is Chancellor of that university. In short, staff and students—the members of the University—had no say in such an appointment, or indeed most aspects of the governance of the institution.

In this example—and there have been similar moments at almost every university in the UK—it became apparent that, for all the baroque charade of 'consultation' and 'engagement'—those hallmarks of New Public Management (NPM)—the university did not belong to its members.<sup>4</sup> It became apparent too, in the context of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension strikes of 2018, that universities *en bloc* were being run not in the interests of students, of scholars, or the common good, but a narrow neoliberal agenda. When we speak of a governance crisis in Higher Education (HE), the issue of unaccountability and lack of control by the majority sit at the heart of the problem. As a result of government policies, universities, and the education and knowledge they produce, are not public goods, but private ones. In this volume, examples are provided which show that there are alternatives. In this chapter, we introduce the context to these alternatives under three headings: what is Co-operative Higher Education (CHE), the

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<sup>2</sup>Leicester Union, University of Leicester should re-consider the appointment of David Willetts as Chancellor. [Change.org](https://www.change.org/p/university-of-leicester-university-of-leicester-should-re-consider-the-appointment-of-david-willetts-as-chancellor). <https://www.change.org/p/university-of-leicester-university-of-leicester-should-re-consider-the-appointment-of-david-willetts-as-chancellor>. Accessed 28 March 2019.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/university-leicester-david-willetts-conservative-1304292>. Accessed 28 March 2019

<https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/university-leicester-urged-re-consider-1222424>. Accessed 28 March 2019

<sup>4</sup>There are many good introductions to NPM. Ferlie, E., L. Ashburner, L. Fitzgerald, and A. Pettigrew. 1996. *The New Public Management in Action*. Oxford: OUP; Christensen, T., and P. Lægreid. Introduction. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to New Public Management*, ed. T. Christensen and P. Lægreid, 1–16. Farnham: Ashgate; and J. Newman, 'Serving the Public? Users, Consumers and the Limits of NPM', in *ibid.*, 349–60.

Co-operative University Project (CUP) and the neoliberal university. We also offer a brief consideration of the themes this collection addresses.

## What is Co-operative Higher Education?

Co-operative education has a long and complex history, with global reach, multiple meanings, and encompasses a ‘rich ecology of educational provision’.<sup>5</sup> Although it still warrants further research, co-operative education has undergone increased scholarly attention in recent years.<sup>6</sup> For example, Woodin discussed the emergence of co-operative community education in the nineteenth century when it fluctuated between the practical and the utopian; Vernon described how co-operative education was an early innovator in technical education and workforce development; Shaw reminded us of the role of the Co-operative College in supporting the growth of co-operative education and the global movement internationally and more recently, there has been a focus on co-operative schools.<sup>7</sup> There has also been a long-standing ambition for over 150 years to establish CHE and even a co-operative university (CU), and recent research has focused on co-operative provision at this level.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of level, what is nearly always privileged in any discussion of co-operative education is the claim that its difference lies in its

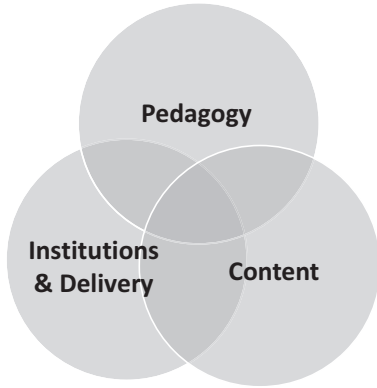
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<sup>5</sup> Shaw, L. 2015. Mapping Co-operative Education in the UK. In *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values*, ed. T. Woodin, 162. London: Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> See Shaw, L. 2012. *Co-operative Education Review*. Manchester: Co-operative College; Shaw, L. 2013. What Is Co-operative Education? Manchester: Co-operative College Unpublished Paper; Shaw, 2015, 161–76.

<sup>7</sup> Woodin, T. 2011. Co-operative Education in Britain During the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Context, Identity and Learning. In *The Hidden Alternative, Co-operative Values, Past, Present and Future*, ed. A. Webster, 78–95. Manchester: MUP; Vernon, K., ‘Values and Vocation: Educating the Co-operative Workforce 1918–39’, in *ibid.*, 37–58; Shaw, L. 2012. *Co-operative Education Review*, 13. Manchester: Co-operative College; Davidge, G. 2016. *Rethinking Education Through Critical Psychology: Co-operative Schools, Social Justice and Voice*. London: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> Saunders, G. 2017. Somewhere Between Reform and Revolution: Alternative Higher Education and ‘The Unfinished’. In *Mass Intellectuality and Democratic Leadership in Higher Education*, ed. R. Hall and J. Winn. London: Bloomsbury; Neary, M., and J. Winn. 2017. There Is an Alternative: A Report on an Action Research Project to Develop a Framework for Co-operative Higher Education. *Learning and Teaching* 10: 87–105.



**Active learning** based on co-operative values. We start from the needs of learners around real issues.

**Participatory approaches** – learning is a process.

**Solidarity not competitive learning.**

**Research** which underpins all we do.

**Institutions & Delivery** – flexible, distributed, starts from where people are at in creative learning spaces.

**Content** – democracy, governance, values and principles, co-operative identity, member control, social justice, social purpose.

**Fig. 1.1** The sweet spot of CHE (Thanks to Linda Shaw and Stirling Smith for their 2016 guidance in the development of this schematic)

advocacy and commitment to participatory and active learning approaches—whether in the nineteenth-century reading room above a co-operative shop, in study circles, in using distance and correspondence course methods, or through online learning.<sup>9</sup> Whilst these methods and pedagogies are now widespread in mainstream HE, this was not always the case whereas such approaches often characterized co-operative adult education from its inception and certainly in its present.<sup>10</sup>

CHE consists of a bundle of pedagogic approaches underpinned by values: active learning, listening, researching, writing and thinking; participatory and action research; critical thinking; interdisciplinarity; solidaristic not competitive practice; collective, personal and individual reflection, self-awareness; inclusivity and collaboration. A successful alignment of these approaches, fused with appropriate content and delivery, results in a CHE sweet spot, see Fig. 1.1.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Woodin, T. 2015. *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values*, ed. London: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Woodin, T. 2011.

<sup>11</sup> See Benson and Ross in Chap. 3 of this collection and <https://www.mondragon.edu/en/information-of-interest/learning-model>

In this volume the terms CHE and CU are used together. CHE might take an institutional form, for example, existing as a Co-operative Higher Education Institution (HEI), and thus constitute or be approximate to, a university, as well as describe tertiary education which reflects and draws upon particular pedagogical and ontological approaches. However, CHE can take place within a mainstream university, by employing the pedagogical and ontological techniques noted above. A co-operative university is very specifically a degree-awarding body which is likely to deliver CHE, but it might also provide HE which is not co-operative: that is, that the organizational structure is co-operative, but the education provided is not co-operative in character.

## The UK Co-operative University Project

As discussed in Chap. 3, there are co-operative university models to be found internationally and whilst diverse, they are distinguished to a greater or lesser extent from mainstream universities by a commitment to CHE and to co-operative forms of governance and democratic practice.<sup>12</sup> In the UK the Co-operative College's work with a number of co-operative universities helped early thinking about whether or not to seek university title or degree awarding powers (DAPs), and more tangibly, the idea of a UK co-operative university emerged from a trio of contexts.

First was a report written by Dan Cook in 2013 for the Co-operative College which explored the barriers and enablers to the realization of a co-operative university.<sup>13</sup> The report contributed to an emerging body of interest, literature and research on alternative models of Higher Education and CHE from *within* the HE mainstream.<sup>14</sup> At the same time academics,

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<sup>12</sup>Boden, R., P. Ciancelli, and S. Wright. 2012. Trust Universities? Governance for Post-capitalist Futures. *Journal of Co-operative Studies* 45: 16–24.

<sup>13</sup>Cook, Dan. 2013. Realising the Co-operative University. Unpublished report for the Co-operative College.

<sup>14</sup>Wright, S., et al. 2011. Report on a Field Visit to Mondragón University: A Co-operative Experience/Experiment. *Learning and Teaching* 4: 38–56; Social Science Centre, Lincoln. 2013. An Experiment in Free, Co-operative Higher Education. *Radical Philosophy* 182: 66–7; Yeo, S. 2014. The Co-operative University? Transforming Higher Education. In *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values*, ed. Tom Woodin. London: Routledge.

educators and practitioners were experiencing heightened levels of alienation, casualization, instrumentalization and performance management and this, coupled with deepening concerns about student debt, vice chancellors' pay and work precarity, resulted in the growth of a values-based community of academic practice interested in pushing forward on co-operative Higher Educational thinking.<sup>15</sup>

Second was the passing of a piece of legislation—the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)—the latest iteration of long-term trends in the marketization and privatization of Higher Education.<sup>16</sup> The Act should be seen in the historical context of the neoliberal attack on public goods and services as this ideology has transformed universities into businesses, run as corporations, and the education provided by them as private goods benefiting individual students. The Act introduced a single new regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), which enables the emergence of 'challenger institutions' to complement existing Higher Education and offers a faster route to acquiring DAPs. Thus whilst the legislation is designed to dismantle the public university, it also opens the door to new providers, including a co-operative university.

A third and final context is the proliferation of co-operative and social solidarity models into new economic and social spaces and sectors—such as the gig economy. There is clearly a renewed interest in the co-operative as an alternative social and economic form to capitalism as new models of work and social organizing emerge.<sup>17</sup> This has prompted fresh thinking not only about what sort of co-operative education is needed for the future but also a recommitment to reconnect co-operative education with its

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<sup>15</sup> Brown, R. 2013. *Everything for Sale? The Marketization of UK Higher Education*. Research into Higher Education. Routledge; Neary, M., and J. Winn. 2017. Beyond Public and Private: A Framework for Co-operative Higher Education. *Open Library of Humanities* 3 (2): 2, 1–36; Winn, J. 2015. The Co-operative University: Labour, Property and Pedagogy. *Power and Education* 7 (1).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/contents>. Accessed 19 May 2017.

<sup>17</sup> See CICOPA. 2018. *Global Study on Youth Co-operative Entrepreneurship*. Geneva: ICA; Webster, T., et al., eds. 2016. *Mainstreaming Co-operation*. Manchester: MUP; Roelants, B., et al. 2012. *The Resilience of the Cooperative Model: How Worker Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Other Worker-Owned Enterprises Respond to the Crisis and Its Consequences*. CECOP, CICOPA; and Bird, A., P. Conaty, and C. Ross. 2017. *Organising Precarious Workers, Trade Union and Co-operative Strategies*. London: TUC.



roots in adult education, as is originally evidenced in the 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction enquiry into adult education.<sup>18</sup>

In 2016, partly in anticipation of the proposed legislation, a group of representatives from the co-operative movement, academics, educators, practitioners and students began to meet informally to consider the Co-operative College's response to HERA. This became the Co-operative University Working Group (CUWG) which was encouraged by a fresh report scoping the viability of a UK co-operative university.<sup>19</sup> A recommendation to the Co-operative College's Trustees was approved: that a twin-track approach should be taken to explore the formation of DAPs to enable a growing range of Higher Education co-operatives to provide degrees in federation, enabling all to offer formal qualifications and access student loan finance.

The CUWG consulted widely with a number of Higher Education co-operatives to seek a definition of what a UK co-operative university might look like and did this through a series of roundtables: *Democracy, Members and Governance*; *Accreditation, Curriculum and Pedagogy* and *Livelihood and Finances*. Clearly any co-operative university would need to conform to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) Co-operative Identity Statement and be owned by its members—aligning values with governance.<sup>20</sup> As with any university, a co-operative university would also award degrees, have students and use a university title.

Additional defining characteristics reached by consensus during co-working include a set of CHE principles:

1. The Co-operative University Project is a living, collective project run democratically by its members: students, researchers, teachers and

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<sup>18</sup> Bibby, A. 2015. The Co-operative Disadvantage: Why the Movement Needs a Level Playing Field - Co-operative News. [online] *Co-operative News*. Available at: <http://www.thenews.coop/97065/news/general/co-operative-disadvantage-movement-needs-level-playing-field/>. Accessed 22 March 2017; see <https://www.co-op.ac.uk/adult-education>. And Ministry of Reconstruction. 1919. *Adult Education Committee: Final Report*. London: H. M. Stationery Office.

<sup>19</sup> Ramos, E. A. 2017. Feasibility Study to Acquire Degree Awarding Powers (in the light of the Higher Education and Research Act). A report for the Co-operative College. Manchester: Co-operative College.

<sup>20</sup> The ICA is the apex body of co-operatives globally; see <https://ica.coop/en>

- other stakeholders, in solidarity with their communities and with other co-operatives locally and globally.
2. Arising out of the co-operative movement, co-operative education is values based on principle, mutual in practice, and justice orientated in outcome. It is based on mutual learning and shared knowledge, whereby students play a central role in educational design, content and delivery. Spaces of learning are driven by justice, equality and fairness.
  3. Co-operative Higher Education is based upon the principle that teachers and students have much to learn from each other and their communities.
  4. Co-operative Higher Education aims to establish shared knowledge and understanding for people and the planet with an aim to:
    - Co-create educational and social practices based upon political and economic democracy
    - Challenge injustice, inequality and exploitation in all its forms
    - Strengthen, enhance and grow co-operative leadership to boost the co-operative sector, the labour movement and other social justice movements
    - Develop thoughtful understandings of co-operation
    - Enhance well-being and foster the possibility for everyone to explore their full range of abilities
  5. Co-operative Higher Education is underpinned by ways of learning about and researching co-operation through the active and equal participation of everyone. We have a view of the world that is based upon co-operative values, integrity, equality and a commitment to education with a social purpose.
  6. Ultimately, the co-operative university will be a federated network of independent and autonomous co-operatives.

Some discussions within the roundtables were challenging for all participants. For example, an informal, individual and collective assumption was that a UK co-operative university would offer courses at low fees.

However, the CUWG was ultimately persuaded by the expert leading the Livelihood and Finances roundtable that this would not necessarily benefit low income students in terms of repayment criteria nor guarantee a high-quality offer.<sup>21</sup> What is more, CUWG collectively recognized and accepted that Higher Education has a relatively high unit cost because education is an expensive but vital public good. Likewise there were sensitive discussions about the relationship between the Co-operative College, which is applying for DAPs, and the federated co-operatives. How might the federation as a self-critical scholarly community deal collectively with quality or economic problems in one of its members? An Interim Academic Board which consists of representatives of each federated co-operative, associated trade unions of the co-operative and student movements, and other adult education providers continues to explore these challenges. The focus at the time of writing is on planning and delivering CHE which attracts students from within and without the existing and emerging co-operative movement as well as wider alternative constituencies.

Co-operatives and other forms within the social solidarity economy are an alternative to the neoliberal economic model; however, they are often seen as hidden alternatives.<sup>22</sup> Fundamentally a co-operative is a business, a people-centred enterprise which is owned and run by and for its members. Profits generated are either reinvested in the enterprise or returned to the members. The formal ICA definition of a co-operative is that it is:

An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprises.<sup>23</sup>

Co-operatives are driven by values not just profit, and share internationally agreed principles which strive to build sustainable global

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<sup>21</sup>McGettigan, A. 2013. *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education*. London: Pluto.

<sup>22</sup>Webster, A., et al., eds. 2011. *The Hidden Alternative, Co-operative Values, Past, Present and Future*. Manchester: MUP.

<sup>23</sup><https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>. Accessed 24 March 2019.

solidarity.<sup>24</sup> These values are self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity; co-operative members also believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Yet it is not only these values that distinguish co-operatives from other businesses. What makes a co-operative different is how it holds a set of principles which revolve around alternative ownership and democratic governance and which are guidelines to putting values into practice.<sup>25</sup> In summary, the co-operative model offers a political economy of social value, solidarity and sustainability, rather than pursuing only profit.

Whilst in the UK co-operatives are associated primarily with the retail sector, globally co-operatives are ubiquitous and can be found in almost every corner of the economy—agriculture, fisheries, transport, social care, education, services and finance. According to the ICA, co-operatives account for 1.2 billion members, with one in every six people on the planet a member of the 3 million co-operatives worldwide.<sup>26</sup> In the post-crash period co-operatives are proving a resilient business and ownership model which increasingly appeals to the young.<sup>27</sup> They are also profitable, with the top 300 co-operatives and mutuals reporting a total turnover of US\$2.1 trillion, and sustainable, with 80 per cent of worker co-operative start-ups surviving compared to 44 per cent of those firms using a traditional business model.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the privileging of the business character of the co-operative model, by presenting it solely as an economic entity, obscures its origins as a

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<sup>24</sup> Co-operatives take many different forms yet what fosters commonality is how they are owned and governed by their members, that is, the people or stakeholders who buy from them or use their services (as in consumer co-operatives); who make things (producer co-operatives); who work in them (worker co-operatives) or by the people who live in them (housing co-operatives). Additionally, there are multi-stakeholder (or solidarity) co-operatives such as those that bring together a number of different types of stakeholders.

<sup>25</sup> The principles are the following: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community.

<sup>26</sup> World Co-operative Monitor, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> See CICOPA. 2018. *Global Study on Youth Co-operative Entrepreneurship*. Geneva: ICA; Roelants, B., et al. 2012. *The Resilience of the Cooperative Model: How Worker Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Other Worker-Owned Enterprises Respond to the Crisis and Its Consequences*. CECOP, CICOPA; Webster, T., et al., eds. 2016. *Mainstreaming Co-operation*. Manchester: MUP.

<sup>28</sup> Co-operatives UK, 2018 Review.

radical social movement and response to exploitation and industrialization which, according to ‘Law First’ of the objects of the Rochdale Co-operative Society, would help to change the world:

That as soon as is practicable, this Society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education, and government, or in other words to establish a self-supporting home-colony of united interests, or assist other societies in establishing such colonies.<sup>29</sup>

The context in which this early political and solidarity education flourished was one of considerable disruption when values-driven grass-roots movements ‘self-educated’ in the pub, chapel, factory and store, a collective answer to the individuated working-class autodidact traditions.<sup>30</sup> Nurtured by notions of self-improvement, a belief that ‘knowledge is power’ and with no access to formal education, co-operators and trade unionists knew that education not only empowered the individual but was fundamental to building movements that would secure change. The Rochdale Pioneers fully understood the role education would play in developing co-operative skills, character and a new economic and social order that would challenge capitalism.<sup>31</sup> It is upon this tradition that CHE draws.

## The Neoliberal University and its Crises

The field of critical university studies has, for the main part, focused on critiques of the neoliberal university. First identified by Williams in 2012, the field has concentrated on the problems produced by changes in how Higher Education is managed as a result of government policies.<sup>32</sup> These

<sup>29</sup>Law First, The Rochdale Pioneers, 1844, Colony to the Pioneers refers to countries, or places within the Co-operative Commonwealth.

<sup>30</sup>See Lovett, T., ed. 1988. *Radical Approaches to Adult Education: A Reader*. London: Routledge.

<sup>31</sup>Woodin, T. 2011. Co-operative Education in Britain During the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Context, Identity and Learning. In *The Hidden Alternative, Co-operative Values, Past, Present and Future*, ed. A. Webster, et al., 78–95. Manchester: MUP.

<sup>32</sup>Williams, J. J. 2012. Deconstructing Academe: The Birth of Critical University Studies. *The Chronicle*.