



ICA European Research Conference “Co-operatives contributions to a plural economy”

2-4 September 2010, Lyon, France

Call for papers

The existence of co-operatives puts into practice the idea of a plural economy, namely, an economy articulated by a plurality of organisational forms of production and exchange. Under the viewpoint of the co-operative world, the main issues of such a plurality is that of *attractiveness* and the variety of their *articulations* with other forms of production and labour organisation.

The Conference aims at raising questions and analyses regarding such a plurality, seen as a possible way of managing efficiently a variety of issues coming from human economic activity, including social ones and environmental ones. In this conference framework, the following topics will be especially welcome.

(1) **The specific contribution of co-operatives**

An economy that is plural is justified by the differentiated contributions of each of his poles: non-market production by non-profit organisations and public organisations; modalities of redistribution operated by public administrations; etc. What is the specific contribution of co-operatives in this framework of plurality? Is it only an extra-economic one (training, stakeholder's roles...), or does it regard the economic dimension of co-operative activities as well?

(2) **What favourable institutional and organisational combinations for the development of the co-operative world?**

In other words, which institutions and which organisations are required for the co-operative to overcome their difficulties and to develop, during the various periods of their activity and of their life: entrepreneurship training and support; short-run and longer-run finance and, beyond, financial services; sectoral representation; advocacy and lobbying, etc. What is the actual state of such combinations, especially in the European Union? That is to say, is the co-operative environment plural enough to let them develop on the long run while providing means for overcoming short-run crises?

(3) **Plurality of co-operative law**

The recent statute of European co-operative society offers new possibilities. However, they add up to the existing specific country rules rather than harmonise them. How is this statute actually integrated in the various national co-operative law? What can be said, 4 years after its implementation, regarding the success of this new statute? Does it really generate a new layer of co-operatives, clearly distinct from co-operatives

under national law? What can be said on the diversity of co-operative statutes in the countries of the EU today?

(4) The problem of attractiveness of co-operatives : between competition and complementarity of entrepreneurship modes

The co-operative world is too often seen like parasite or illegitimate by the classical firms and their representative organisations. In various countries, fiscal advantages for co-operatives raise the major question of the legitimacy of co-operative specificities. How to analyse the concurrence of co-operatives and non-co-operative firms? Should one analyse the development of co-operative groups integrating non-co-operative entities (as, for example, the famous co-operative complex of Mondragón) as a sign of complementarities, as a contradiction, or as a fatal drift of the co-operative world? Is there competition processes between these types of firms (beyond their very activity), which would lead to the question of the choice of the legal statute of a firm, from its creation to its end, going through major steps of its life (bankruptcy, leaders retiring...)? All this eventually refers to the general problem of attractiveness of co-operatives as regards the other possibilities of entrepreneurship. What is at stake regarding the attractiveness of co-operation?

(5) Autonomy or articulation

The present crisis has showed how shifts of co-operative banks or mutual insurance companies towards the practices of classical firms can be dangerous, when submitting them to the same pressures as classical banks or insurance companies or to the same sensibility to financial innovations and to the volatility of financial assets whose prices are fixed on financial markets. Which solutions should be implemented to avoid both such contagion and such shifts in practices? Are there successful cases of protection? Is it necessary to implement a disconnection with this financial system centred on financial markets?

(6) Dynamics and exemplarity of the co-operative innovations

An economy that is plural, namely, organised around a variety of actors and action motives, should be more able to provide efficient solutions to highly evolving economic, social and environmental issues. What answers did the co-operative world bring to those issues, and what answers is it still likely to bring on the matter, facing the environmental, social and economic crises? What dynamics of innovations can be identified in the co-operative world, innovations that were implemented (or are under implementation) as a way of answering these new stakes – in Europe as well as elsewhere in the world?

This list is mainly indicative and proposals on additional topics concerning co-operatives are welcome.

Additional workshops can be proposed too, if they are accompanied by a series of prospective presenters.

Schedule and submission conditions

Paper proposals

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted in English (and possibly in French) by **April, 1st, 2010**, to the following email address :
icalyon2010@cress-rhone-alpes.org

Abstracts should include (in a word document attached to the email) : the name of the author(s), the title of the proposal, the number of the relevant topic (if any) and the abstract; and at the end of the abstract: the address and full title of the author(s); the organisation(s) and email address(es); the name of the corresponding author if the proposal is a collective one.

Answers will be sent to authors by **April, 30st, 2010**.

Complete papers of accepted proposals will be due by **July, 30th, 2010**.

Papers will be uploaded on the conference website before the conference.

Workshop proposals

Additional workshops can be proposed under the form of a set of paper proposals. In this case, a summary of the workshop must be sent in English (and possibly in French) by **April, 1st, 2010**, to the following email address :
icalyon2010@cress-rhone-alpes.org

Workshop proposals should include: the title of the workshop; an abstract of the general theme of no more than 300 words; a list of the prospective presenters with their own abstract of no more than 500 words.

Please note that a workshop must eventually include no less than 3 to 4 contributors.

Answers will be sent to proponents by **April, 30st, 2010**.

Please note that paper proposals included in a workshop proposal are submitted to the same review process than other abstracts (see above), unless agreed otherwise.

Complete papers of accepted proposals should be submitted latest **July, 30th, 2010**. Papers will be uploaded on the conference website before the conference.

Publication

A selection of papers will be published in a collective book in the year following the conference, and possibly in special issue of dedicated journals.

Languages

The Conference language will be English.

English / French translation will be organized for the plenaries.

French-speaking workshops will be organized, according to the proposals and the possibilities.

Conference venue and registration

The Conference will be held in the Université Lyon 2, downtown, located along the river Rhône. Lunches will be taken in the very place of the conference. Accommodation will be booked by attendants themselves in hotels nearby. A list of hotels is available on the website of the conference, see: <http://www.cress-rhone-alpes.org/cress/> .

Scholarships may be available for PhD students and scholars from developing and transforming countries whose paper proposals were accepted for presentation. We will provide more information on availability and application procedures together with the registration forms.

For any information, visit the website of the conference, hosted by the regional chamber of social and solidarity economy (CRESS):

<http://www.cress-rhone-alpes.org/cress/>

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