Call for papers for special issue on co-operative governance
Deadline: March 1, 2014.

A special joint issue of the *International Journal of Co-operative Management* and *Journal of Co-operative Accounting and Reporting*

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**Co-operative governance: A critical approach**

Governance in co-operatives is about democracy, communication and identity, relationships, transparency and decentralized decision-making. It is also about setting rules and regulations and being accountable to members. Governance permeates the entire organization; it is not restricted to Boards of directors, yet in discussions about those rules and procedures, co-operative actors often restrict their discourse to the activities of the Board, without considering the diverse elements of governance essential to the co-operative model.

Co-operative directors face tensions between: 1) acting as *representatives* for particular membership groups, and as *experts* charged with driving forward the performance of the organization; 2) *vision* to move forward, and *conforming* to rules and legal guidelines; 3) *controlling* yet at the same time *supporting* management (Cornforth 2004); 4) pursuing *social* goals, while relying on *financial* performance as the key indicator of success; 5) pursuing aggressive *growth* by capital expansion, while securing *control by the members* (Novkovic 2013).

Besides these tensions, co-operative size matters. How can democratic governance work in large co-operatives? Do co-operatives necessarily lose touch with their members over time as they grow, or are there practices that keep member engagement alive? Should democracy be practiced as a ‘crisis’ option¹, or as a tool that moves the organization forward on an ongoing basis?

Co-operative type matters as well. Worker co-operatives are more likely to focus on the prevention of oligarchy and therefore ensure participatory management and governance practices. Consumer co-operatives are much less likely to have flat management and governance structures.

How does the size of the stake in a co-operative relate to participation and member engagement? Is accountability and transparency more likely to emerge in particular types of co-operatives? Some financial and consumer co-operatives ensure worker participation in decision-making – does deliberate worker engagement make a difference for co-operative governance? Finally, to what extent is democratic governance important to members and important for co-operative success? What is its impact on risk?

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¹ Member participation is often said to be at its best in a crisis.
This special double-issue is devoted to these and other issues of governance in co-operatives. For example, what kinds of performance measures and accounting practices co-operatives use to ensure effective governance and participation, is also of interest to the readership.

We welcome a critical approach that will question the essence of co-operative type of business and the evolving practices that may jeopardize the co-operative identity, but we also welcome best practice solutions to some of the potential problems and risks faced by co-operatives under the pressure of market competition, or oligarchy.

Both theoretical and applied research papers, as well as practical executive reports will be considered. All submitted articles will be subject to peer review process.

Submission deadline:
March 1 2014

Paper length:
5000 words for research papers, and 2000 words for executive reports.

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References:
