

14th ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference

Cooperation among cooperatives and mutuals in the Asia-Pacific region

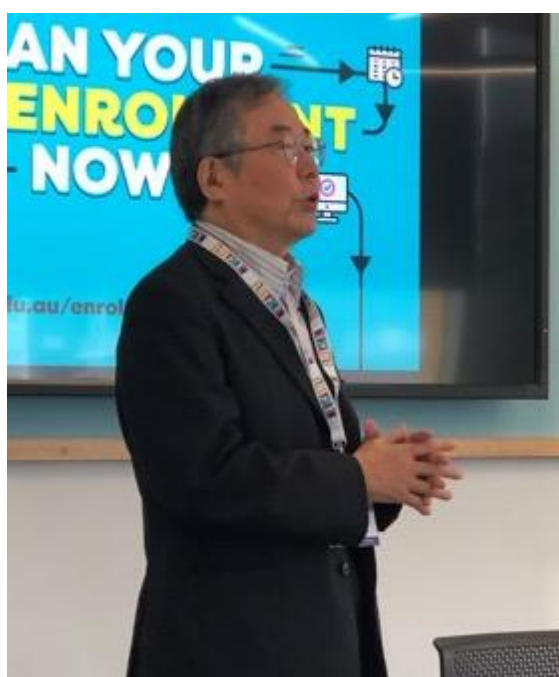
December 12-14, 2019

NeW Space, The University of Newcastle, Australia

The International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific's (ICA-AP) Committee on Cooperative Research (CCR) along with the University of Newcastle (UoN) and support from the ICA-EU Partnership on Cooperatives in Development (#Coops4Dev) and Young Scholars Initiative (YSI) organized the 14th ICA-AP Cooperative Research Conference on “Co-operation among cooperatives and mutuals in the Asia-Pacific region – working together to achieve a flourishing and sustainable future” at the Faculty of Business and Law, University of Newcastle, Australia from 12-14 December 2019.

The conference was well-attended by more than 100 participants from 12 countries viz. Australia (60), Fiji (1), India (19), Indonesia (2), Japan (2), Kiribati (2), South Korea (2), Malaysia (2), Nepal (4), New Zealand (4), Timore Leste (1) and United Kingdom (2) comprising of researchers, policy makers, practitioners and students, who shared their experiences on issues broadly related to cooperation among cooperatives and mutuals, and developed new networks and partnerships around cooperative research and education.

Early Career Researchers' (ECR) and Young Scholars' workshop



An Early Career Researchers' (ECR) and Young Scholars' workshop was conducted on 12th December aiming to provide the participants with an opportunity to be mentored by senior academicians with rich experience in researching and publishing in the area of cooperatives. This was the first time that an ICA-AP CCR conference had held such a workshop, which welcomed 24 ECR/young scholars from 10 countries.

The welcome address was delivered by Prof. Akira Kurimoto, Institute for Solidarity-based Society, Hosei University, Tokyo and Chair of the ICA-AP CCR. Prof. Morris Altman, Co-chair of the local organizing committee also welcomed the participants. The ECRs were given the opportunity to receive feedback on

their draft papers by senior academicians Prof. Morris Altman (Dundee University, School of Business), Prof. Olivera Marjanovic (University of Technology Sydney), Professor Branka Krivokapic-Skoko (Charles Sturt University), Dr. Paul Thambar (Monash University Melbourne) and Prof. Tony Webster (Northumbria University United Kingdom). Break-out sessions on ‘How to get co-operative research published?’ and “Developing a network for emerging co-operative scholars” allowed time for discussions which were facilitated by Ms. Emi Do, PhD candidate at the Tokyo University and YSI Coordinator. The energy in the room was positive as the scholars received good advice and tips on ‘how to’ get published in reputable academic journals (and what not to do). The group also discussed how to use social media and digital platforms to continue to network and support each other through PhD’s and early career challenges.



Welcome Address



The conference was opened on 13th December 2019 by Prof. Jim Jose, Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Business and Law at Newcastle Business School. He reminded the participants that co-operation remains as essential to economic well-being as competition. Mr. Balusubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP expressed his delight at the New Space precinct conference venue and mild Newcastle summer as he warmly welcomed delegates from around the region. He explained that the involvement of Australia and New Zealand in ICA-AP activities helps to increase the support that can be offered to the Pacific neighbours. Prof. Morris Altman greeted the guests and opened the conference proceedings.

Keynote Address



The keynote address on day one was delivered by Ms. Melina Morrison, CEO of the Business Council for Cooperatives and Mutuals on the theme “Opportunities for advancing the cooperative

sector through collaboration among cooperatives”. She talked about the 9 million members of BCCM, representing the largest businesses in sectors ranging from Banking and Finance, Insurance and Agriculture to Housing, Health and Motoring. There are over 2,000 cooperatives operating across sectors, having over US \$3 billion turnover each year.

Prof. Greg Patmore, Emeritus Professor of Business and Labor History in the School of Business, University of Sydney delivered the keynote on the final day of the conference on “The Past, Present and Future of Cooperatives: Visual Atlas of Australian Co-operative History”. His address explored the value of cooperative historical research in challenging organizational amnesia and examining the successes and failures of the cooperative movement as a future guide for strategy and policy. While narrative co-operative history helps build cooperative memory and reinforces cooperative culture, cooperative history driven by policy questions allows the sector to examine questions such as demutualization and the collective ownership of the internet over a long-time period. The address drew upon the Visual Atlas of Australian Cooperative History, which tracks the history of Australian cooperatives from the 1820s to the present, to illustrate these issues.

Research Panels

Research presentations took place in three segments with five concurrent sessions of 3-4 presentations each, as reproduced below. The research sessions provided an opportunity for academia to present over 52 papers to the delegates. The presentations were generally of a high quality and showcased the vast diversity of research on cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region.

Session 1A: Cooperatives, sustainability, resilience and regional development

Session 1B: Legal and institutional parameters and barriers to co-operative growth

Session 1C: Co-operative capital, finance and banking

Session 1D: Co-operative empowerment of women, youth and indigenous communities

Session 1E: Strengthening co-operative advantage using value and supply chains

Session 2A: Co-operative theories and case studies

Session 2B: Worker Co-ops and Decent Work

Session 2C: Gender Equality in Co-operative Governance

Session 2D: Co-operative theories and case studies

Session 2E: Data and measurement for improved co-op performance, impact and accountability

Session 3A: Co-operation among co-operatives

Session 3B: Platform Co-operatives

Session 3C: Co-operative delivery of public services and co-operative education

Session 3D: New models and innovations in agricultural co-ops

Session 3E: Co-operative empowerment of women, youth and indigenous communities

Industry Panels

The conference also hosted industry representatives which led to rich discussions on bridging the gap between academicians and practitioners. The following is a brief overview of the four panels:



Panel 1: “Co-operative’s supporting the regional economy” was facilitated by Mr. Trevor Stuart, AIG Hunter. Panellists included Mr. Boris Novak, industry adviser at Hunter Net cooperative, Mr. Robert Gauta, CEO, Commercial Fisherman’s Cooperative, Ms. Kate Davies, CEO, Tooraweenah Prime Lamb Marketing Cooperative Ltd., Mr. Geoff Seccombe, CEO, The Mutual Bank, Maitland and Dr. T. P. Sethumadhevan, Director, Uralungal Labor Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS), India. The panel discussed the benefits of the cooperative model in working with small businesses and allowing them to not only survive but also thrive, by pooling resources to offer quality services and products to the market. ULCCS also showcased how their pronounced commitment to poverty alleviation has provided jobs with better pay for workers, health insurance and education for their members. The business model supports regional economies by providing employment opportunities, but also ensuring that money continues to circulate in local economies.



Panel 2: “How cooperative innovation and digital technology can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals” was facilitated by Prof. Bronwen Morgan, UNSW Law School. The panel comprised of innovators who are passionate about finding democratic and equitable solutions to contemporary issues. Brief presentations explaining each cooperative initiative included, Mr. Rohan Clarke, founder of the digital networking platform Geddup, Mr. Andrew Ward, CEO, Incubator.coop, Ms. Molly Kendall, Resource Co-operative and Mr. David Davies, CEO AgUnity. The initiative included a digital platform for community groups, waste recycling workers co-op, a business incubator, and the provision of digital solutions for the small-scale farmers in developing countries.



Panel 3: “Co-operation among Co-operatives - Co-operative Training and Education in Oceania” was facilitated by Mr. Sam Byrne, Secretary, Co-ops NSW and the panel members included the CEOs of the national peak bodies for co-operatives in Australia, Ms. Melina Morrison from the BCCM and Ms. Roz Henry from New Zealand (CBNZ) as well as co-op registrars Ms. Kammari Betiota from Kiribati and Mr. Faizal Khan from Fiji. This panel generated a lot of audience discussion, particularly around how we can facilitate cooperative education and the need for quality governance training for cooperative directors in all countries.



Panel 4: “Dairy cooperatives: New challenges and sustainable economic development” The final industry panel was facilitated by Ms. Ann Apps from Newcastle Law School and the panellists included Mr. Greg McNamara, Chairperson, Norco Co-operative, Prof. Nicola Shadbolt, Massey University and former director of Fonterra, Stuart Crosthwaite, Chairperson, Mountain Milk Co-operative and Prof. Anil Karanjkar, Dean VAMNICOM, Pune. The panellists were able to provide excellent insights into contemporary challenges facing the dairy industry and why the cooperative model has proved to be so resilient in this sector. The panel also had an honest discussion about misconceptions around access to capital, and the importance of strong board leadership, and how the absence of these factors combined to lead to some recent demutualisation at Murray Goulburn and Westland NZ.

Closing Plenary



The young scholars made a presentation of their take-aways from the conference in the closing plenary session. They appreciated that senior academics were approachable and willing to share their experience, and that the local organizing committee had “provided a conference with no caste, race, gender and age differences”.

In the closing plenary, Dr. Akira Kurimoto expressed satisfaction with the conference and stated that there had been many *firsts* during the conference; first time in Australia, first time to have organized



an ECR/Young Scholars’ workshop, first time with such diverse set of industry panels, and first time the CEOs of peak bodies had been accessible for the duration of the conference. He thanked all the researchers for preparing the paper and presenting at the conference. Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer reiterated the need to focus on strengthening research networks by making a presence in major research forums and connecting with related fields and research associations. He also stressed on forming a young scholars’ network and more importantly, carrying out collaborative research projects. He also thanked the local organising committee and all the sponsors including NCUI and YSI for their support.

Dr. Mauritz Bonow Young Researcher Award

Dr. Mauritz Bonow, President of ICA (1962 - 1975) was a strong advocate of cooperatives and was responsible for the development of cooperative movement throughout the world and particularly in developing countries. Dr. Bonow was also a strong advocate of education and believed that the strength of the co-operative movement depended on the existence of a vast and enlightened membership. He urged training institutions, colleges and universities to have co-operative training programs, and called on them to award undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees, and doctorates. He felt these students would later play important roles in the enlightenment of the average cooperative worker, making them better co-operators and agents for transforming society.

The Dr. Mauritz Bonow Young Researcher Award is a joint initiative of the ICA-AP and the ICA Domus Trust. The ICA-AP regional office was established in New Delhi in 1960 to provide a voice and forum for knowledge, expertise and coordinated action for and about cooperatives in the region. The ICA Domus Trust was set up in recognition of the valuable contributions made by Dr. Mauritz Bonow.

A sub-committee was set up during the 14th ICA-AP Research Conference to review and adjudicate the best research papers. The following researchers won the prize:



First Prize of US\$ 500

Ms. Heira Hardiyanti

Researcher, Institute for Indonesian
Cooperatives Development studies (LSP21)

Central Jakarta, Indonesia

Paper: “Worker Cooperative in Indonesia, The
Invisible Cooperative”

Second Prize of US\$ 300

Ms. Jihyun Jeong

Researcher, Sungkonghoe University
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Paper: “How do local actors institutionalise
global movement? The case study of Fair Trade
in Korea”

Young Researchers Award of NCUI

The following scholarships were awarded with the generous support of NCUI for young researchers from India:

Ms. Lakshmi A. J.

Assistant Professor

Sree Narayana College, Chempazhanthy

University of Kerala, 695 587 India

Paper: Role of cooperatives in Assimilating Indigenous Community : An Indian Experience

Ms. Neha Christie

PhD research scholar

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Eden Gardens, Deonar, 400 088 India

Paper: Governance, social capital and welfarism - Institutional analysis of dairy cooperatives in Gujarat

