

# Lessons from the Emotivate Project for Increasing Take-Up of Big Society and Responsible Capitalism Initiatives

**Jonathan Bishop**

*Centre for Research into Online Communities and E-Learning Systems, European Parliament,  
Belgium*

## **ABSTRACT**

*Cooperation and respect for different opinions have been considered prime didactic goals in environmental projects which encourage citizen participation (Tsevreini, 2011). Through the realisation of the UK Government's Big Society project, families, individuals, charities, and communities can come together to solve problems through galvanising, catalysing, prompting, encouraging, and agitating for community engagement and social renewal (Cameron, 2009). Environmental activism has long been touted as a necessary addition to the education system (Sanera & Shaw, 1999), and this chapter shows how the Big Society was made a reality before Conservative Party Leader David Cameron first presented it. However, as it usual in British politics, despite being in keeping with the aspirations of the other parties, partisanism is holding it back. For instance the Labour Party believes in "joining the forces of cooperation with competition" yet opposes the Big Society using superficial reasoning. Equally, the Co-operative Party, which is affiliated to Labour, appear more interested in attacking the Conservatives past record on cooperativism than engaging with them to further the cooperative movement. On its own, this shows that the Big Society, where people take action outside of government is needed, especially when one considers that Labour Governments rarely get anti-statist cooperative measures through without the support of other parties, such as the Conservatives in the case of the Cooperative Trust Schools in England. The Big Society therefore needs to be market-led on the basis of responsible capitalism rather than government-led such as via state socialist or state capitalism.*

## **THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Continuing with the premise set forth in the abstract, by stopping tying the hands of the organisations that want to take part in improving community taking the initiative to change it, the government can do more than it could by taking a leading role. As this chapter shows, with only financial support from government, a lot can be achieved by those outside of it using responsible capitalism and community cooperativism. When one gets away from the tribal party politics and focussed on the didactic then anything is possible.

The Emotivate Project aimed to improve the social cohesion between the communities of Treforest and Llantwit Fardre, as stated in the grant applications. These included, that we set out to educate young people about the arts and make a visible contribution to the community by improving the local environment and to encourage the use of electronic learning methods. We also aimed to improve cultural, economic and environmental development of the local communities as well as increase the social cohesion between the local communities. Furthermore, we set out to engage with local community members and encourage participation in improving the local environment and the local community as well as engage with socially excluded people within the community including young offenders and people on probation.

Intellectual capital is intellectual material, such as knowledge, information, intellectual property, and experience, which can be put to use to create wealth (Stewart, 1997). Intellectual assets are things such as written documents, software, musical compositions and so forth, which are created by humans and can be exploited by an undertaking to achieve their objects (Davis & Harrison, 2001). The actors in the project consisted of the Managing Director taking on the role of 'Internal Affairs Manager', the Company Secretary tak-

ing on the role of 'Project Manager' and one of the Non-Executive Directors taking on the role of 'External Affairs Manager'. Actors that were brought in included the learning 'Instructors' and 'Facilitators' and of course the beneficiaries of the project, the 'Learners'. The systems used in the project included 'Accounting', 'Booking', 'Project Management' and 'Learning Management'. Tools used by the young people included Moodle run on PCs in an extended school, and the instruments associated with painting. The landscapers used the obvious tools for planting, and it was generally the case that all persons in the project used email for communication.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Emotivate Project was conceived by the author after walking through an underpass that had the tile-work either smashed or burden off, and was frequented by youths who acted anti-socially. This project, envisaged as a way to bring together aspects of environmental, social and educational change. The project therefore aimed to demonstrate the strategic implementation of sustainable development through a unique blended learning model, or 'bLearning' model, which was designed for enabling young people to design and paint a mural using knowledge gained through e-learning. This was achieved through applying the Learn, Create, Communicate model and P4 and the tangible realisation of the mural (illustrated in Figure 1).

It also aimed to give the directors the chance to develop credibility in the business community as 'responsible capitalists' and 'community co-operators', through providing the opportunity to gain a strong and demonstrable management track record of personal achievement. This was achieved with them gaining fellowships in the Royal Society of Arts and BCS – The Chartered Institute for IT and/or becoming parliamentary candidates within the year. Since the murals were installed

*Figure 1. The St Dyfrig's underpass, before (left) and after (right)*



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

in 2009 until the present date there has been no major reports of crime in the area, and common problems like drug taking, and harassment had vanished, perhaps due to sense of ownership in the scheme by young people, who included not just law-abiding ones, but young offenders as well.

### **THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN BUILDING COMMUNITY COHESION THROUGH SOCIAL CHANGE**

It has been argued that information and knowledge acquisition for a core part of protests in environmental activism (Finger, 1994). Indeed it has been argued that knowledge management is as likely, if not more so, to operate as a practice of managing people or information than as a practice attuned towards facilitating knowledge creation (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001). This was never truer than at Glamorgan Blended Learning Ltd (GBL), a cooperative social enterprise based in South Wales in the United Kingdom with a mission to improve the vitality, viability and visual development of these communities. Building on

the intensity given to public participation since the late 1980s, due to environmental activism (Després, Vachon, & Fortin, 2011), GBL allowed its learners to create authentic knowledge through experiential learning and environmental change through its 'Emotivate Project'.

The Emotivate Project aimed to explore the impact of producing unique murals for display on two sides of an underpass in the heart of Treforest. The murals were designed and created by local young people for their local communities with support advice and guidance from a professional artist. The designs reflected their interpretations of the environment and society they live in and the changes they would like to make. This section explained the details of this and provides findings for future research. The Emotivate Project involved the twinning of a school in Llantwit Fardre, called Garth Olwg, with a community Church in the villages of Treforest, to give 11 young people in the area the opportunity to learn new skills in Photoshop using Moodle and classroom support. The project blended the concept of 'eTwinning' with traditional community partners to give these young people the chance to make a tangible difference to their community of Treforest, through designing collages of ideas on

what they knew about its past and what hope's they had for its future. These were then designed as a mural by an artist and the young people then painted it before it was installed. This process could be called 'bTwinning.'

The project involved using the 'Learning Create Communicate' technique, based on a consolidation of the constructivism of Vygotsky (1930), the Learning Style inventories of Kolb (1984) and current and evolving technology developments, such as the PASS approach of Bishop (2004). This LCC approach says that learning will most effectively occur where learners first acquire culturally sanctioned knowledge; apply it in an idea that interests them, before communicating it to others. Synthesising this with the works of Bereiter & Scardamalia (2003), and Paavola, Lipponen, & Hakkarainen (2004) leads to the three stage model below:

### **The "Learn" Stage: Encouraging Acquisition of Knowledge**

In terms of 'learning' the open source system Moodle was used to hold the bespoke learning objects for the course. The learners were presented with information on the history of Treforest and mining in Pontypridd with interactive Google Maps, as well as tuition on the use of Photoshop, supported by two tutors. The proliferation of open source systems like Moodle means only the content production is resource intensive, but even this is becoming less so with free to use materials on Wikipedia and Creative Commons among others.

### **The "Create" Stage: Encouraging Application of Knowledge**

The 'create' component involved the learners designing ideas reflecting the things in Treforest's past and what they would like to see in its future. Designs included the iconic Pink Shop and University Glamorgan representing the past, and hydrogen bus and wind turbine, which represented

the future. This provided a moral agenda for the local politicians on how they should be planning for the future generations. In fact the Project Manager, who was the elected town councillor for the village, supported projects, such as those to build a wind turbine, on the basis of what the young people reflected their wishes for in the mural.

### **The "Communicate" Stage: Encouraging Articulation of Knowledge**

The 'communicate' component involved the learners describing to others about the activities they carried out, the reasons why they got involved and the meaning of their contribution. One of the participants, who we shall call Channel said on video camera for the Welsh language broadcaster S4C in Welsh, "When I used to go on the bike with my friends, the walls were really plain and boring and it smelt terrible, but now that we've done this it's made it much better." (English Translation). This aids the development of community memes, which can help in the acceptance of community projects like this, as the moral benefit of didactic projects may enhance community spirit.

### **Special Aspects of the Experiment**

In enacting the Emotivate Project, GBL brought a lot of specialised intellectual capital from different fields of endeavour. The Project Manager had worked in the IT and construction industries, bringing particular working practices from the private sector that were new to the team members from the third sector. The External Affairs Manager had a lot of experience in the third sector having previously worked as a trustee. This knowledge served the company well in managing relations with external funders, and resolving difficulties caused by partners who didn't fit well with GBL's mission. The Internal Affairs Manager proved crucial to keeping the project on track, ensuring everyone's competencies were being used to the

benefit of the company. This is known to be an effective approach, as organisational structures determined by core competencies can adapt to chaotic external pressures more easily (Egbu, 2004). Intellectual assets, such as project documentation allowed for the comprehensive communication of project objectives and deliverables, but it was soon discovered that time-stretched partners needed their particular part of the project communicated in more specific and concise memos to actually be acted on. The Project Manager was responsible for directing the implementation of the innovation strategies for Emotivate and the exploitation of these to generate new practice for managing new and innovative products and services. They ensured that contracts were signed, setting out partner duties and responsibilities. This served to identify potential problems with commitment and objectivity, which in one single instance meant that the team was able to identify a partner of whom had goals not consistent with those of the project. This led to the identification of new collaborators with more suitable core competencies.

In some rural communities, knowledge transformation is directly linked to the commodity-production emphasis of rural economic reforms by the public sector (Hawkins, 1988). When GBL was putting its package together for Emotivate it was quite apparent funders were putting the emphasis on the individual development of participants and regeneration of the former coalfields community and this varied the approach taken to the design of learning materials and the implementation of the learning management system.

The less than experienced organisers running the project soon discovered the importance of teamwork and ensuring everyone was heading in the same direction. Glamorgan Blended Learning Ltd is a cooperative social enterprise limited by guarantee. This gives it quite a distinct structure as an organisation. As a company limited by guarantee it has no share capital so each member of the company's stake and liability is the same. As a cooperative its membership is open and voluntary

and its organisational focus is to cooperate with other organisations to achieve mutual goals. As a social enterprise it aims to trade in commercial markets, yet use profits to achieve its societally orientated objectives.

The Emotivate Project involved 11 young people living in the former coalfields areas of Pontypridd and Llantwit Fardre, giving them chance to take part in a blended learning project to improve a village in that community called 'Treforest'. The programme took place in venues not owned by the organisers, which included underused community facilities, church halls, as well as extended schools. These not only provided these venues with revenue, but also meant the investment normally needed for an educational establishment were restricted to the administrative headquarters. The project demonstrated that partnerships between the people, private and public sectors (called a 'P4' scheme) can work just as effectively, if not more, as public private schemes.

### **Strong Points, Failings, and Critical Issues**

The project proved the *Excellence in Transforming Understanding through Distributed Independent Education Resources* (ETUDIER) approach to education. This ETUDIER approach to education, involved using existing and sometimes under-used buildings in the community for the project. By using the existing buildings in the community, showed a community education provider needs a maximum of three core staff. The remainder staffing and support can be 'contingent workers', as happened with sub-contractors in the construction industry before the Labour Government acted on the demands of the trade unions. The role of didactic mechanisms, particularly through religious organisations advocating particular morals, will become more common with the Big Society agenda as the government looks likely to reduce costs in state provision (Dinham & Shaw, 2011). It has been known for over a generation that the best firms



are those which focus on what they do best and using the services of another provider to do those things which while essential are not required to be done in-house (Porter, 1996). This includes things such as customer-service and IT-support, which can be more effectively done by private firms like Logica. It also includes odd-jobs, like grass-cutting and litter-picking, which can be more cheaply and more effectively done by volunteers (e.g. from Friends of the Earth) or 'involunteers' (e.g. from the youth offending or probation services, welfare system, or conscription).

The Big Society policy has highlighted the value of the contribution that local people can make to well-being in their own communities, and plans to increase the contribution of community groups and people sector organisations in delivering services (Taylor, Mathers, Atfield, & Parry, 2011). As can be seen in Figure 2, the payment in kind in terms of volunteers and 'involunteers' accounted for £4,250 of the project, which was the same as that for the building work from the Private Sector. This shows that the people sector, through voluntary labour can make big cost savings over the public and private sectors through using volunteers.

*Figure 2. Income sources for the Emotivate Project*

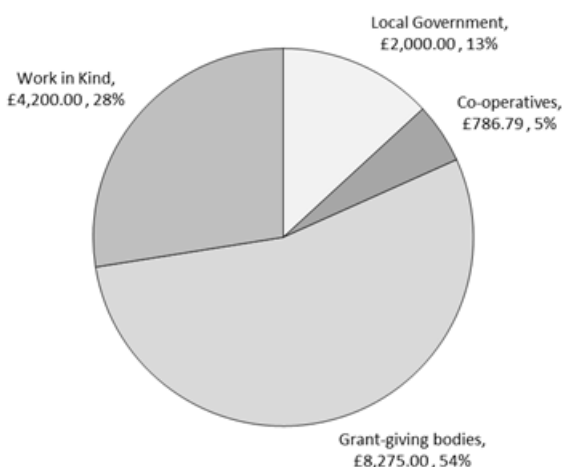


Figure 3 also shows a number of limitations with a society based on independent people sector organisations. The indirect costs in terms of overheads – which excluded staff as they formed part of the 'work in kind' – were the same value as the essential costs of building hire and landscaping combined (£1665). Far from meaning an increase in the size of the people sector will lead to a decrease in efficiency, it provides an ideal opportunity for the private sector to expand. Private firms specialising in outsourcing of payroll and billing could take on these and other administrative tasks from a reduced cost than the 11% of the budget as in Emotivate. The virtual company structure used by GBL, in which office space from a business incubator costs £50 a year, could be a starting point for other people sector bodies wanting to maximize grant income.

Not everyone is sympathetic to the Big Society. Traditionalists argue against it as likely to rapidly become a political liability and burden voluntary groups and charities with responsibilities that they may be unable to deliver on (Lewis, 2011). That was shown not to be the case in The Emotivate Project. However Lewis's concerns about the lack of a business model for the Big Society have been echoed by others. Pharoah (2011) for instance argues that while government has clearly signalled the importance it attaches to the growth of charitable giving and philanthropy in building the Big Society, there has been little appraisal of what needs to be achieved through this approach, and how far growth is feasible

## **Solutions and Recommendations**

The approach taken by GBL in creating the Emotivate Project offers some distinct advantages over the Private Public Partnership model. By GBL adopting a voluntary not for profit model it was able to secure grant funding from a number of organisations (People Sector in Table 1). The money raised from the local government (Public Sector in Table 1) was £2,000, which was just

Figure 3. Areas of spending for the Emotivate Project

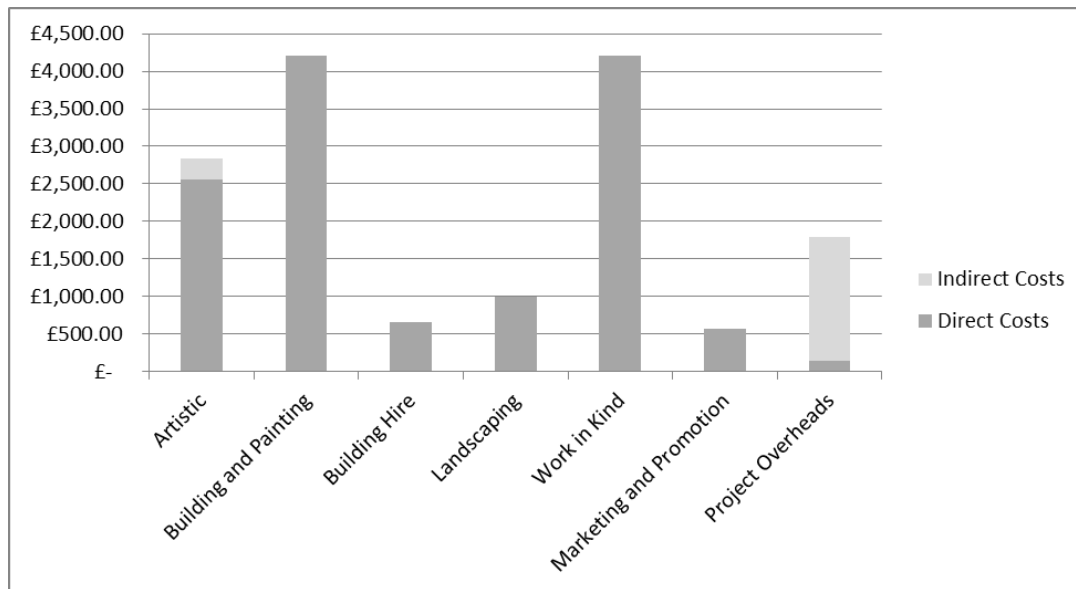


Table 1. Types of community organization

Sector	Description
The People Sector	The people sector includes charities, social enterprises, voluntary organizations, dividend-based non-for-profit (e.g. consumer cooperatives) and other statutory not-for-profit organizations, like Welsh Water and Network Rail. Where possible new generation organizations should seek to collaborate with the people sector to meet their stakeholder's objectives on a cooperative basis where there is a vertical relationship or where a non-competitive horizontal relationship with a block exemption is possible.
The Private Sector	The private sector consists of private individuals, such as residents, who may be freelance, or self-employed, formally incorporated businesses (e.g. Centrica, Tesco), or other organizations run for-profit (e.g. Profit-distributing to members in workers cooperatives or clubs).
The Public Sector	The public sector is the local authority, police, environment agency, state hospitals and schools, parliaments/assemblies.

under 20% of that gained from grant-giving bodies outside of the community, most of them only available to not-for-profits. This shows that a Big Society model offers advantages over the solely public and private models as revenue can be raised from many more sources other than local taxes or consumer purchases. Indeed, for each 15p of tax-payers money spent, it was matched by 35p from other sources. This meant a municipal tax rise of 0.01% was avoided.

The virtual company structure that GBL utilises seems to be ideal to its operations as a cooperative social enterprise that seeks to build partnerships with others rather than do everything

in-house. The implementation of this during projects involves for instance the External Affairs Manager identifying facilities in the community based on factors, such as pricing and resource availability. Specifically in terms of the Emotivate Project it involved the locating of an IT suite to deliver the e-learning and a workshop to enable the application of the learning to the creation of a mural. This involved referring to project documentation that specified the project objectives, which managers had a say in writing and helped create for re-use. This fitted in with the current trend of recycling and re-using knowledge, instead of reinventing the wheel (Al-Hawamdeh, 2002).

The overheads for the project included the Web Hosting and domain registration. There are an increasing number of pay-as-you-go services launching on the Internet, such as near-lyfreespeech.net, which can reduce costs significantly for people sector organisations. Ones like GBL which use e-learning can benefit, as GBL did, from open-source solutions like Moodle, and easy to use systems like WordPress can also provide a platform on which to market their offerings.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Essential to the success of P4 organisations that engage in responsible capitalism and community cooperativism will be minimum standards. These may be best done on a market led basis, which can be in collaboration between the different P4 organisations. Future research needs to look even beyond a single type of firm and look at mixing the models. GBL is well placed to do this as it is a 'private' limited company, but also 'not-for-profit', which also makes it a people sector firm. Future research also needs to look at how open source systems like Moodle can be extended to provide a greater didactic basis for changing attitudes of community members who may be socially excluded. The Learn, Create, Communicate model may be essential in this, as these groups are often lacking in confidence in expressing themselves due to negative stimuli from others.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented an overview of the role the 'Big Society' scheme can play in supporting positive environmental activism by combining the forces of responsible capitalism with community

cooperativism. The study shows that while volunteers (and involunteers such as offenders) can play a big part in increasing value of projects equivalent to that of private sector contractors, these cannot on their own make the changes aimed for by the Big Society. Glamorgan Blended Learning showed that the UK Government's further proposal for 'free schools' is more than workable, as affordable building hire can be matched with cost effective private sector tutors and volunteers to create positive and lasting blended learning (i.e. bLearning) experiences. Trough facilitating partnerships between school and communities using both electronic (i.e. eTwinning) and traditional means, it is possible to improve the learning outcomes in the form of blended twinning (i.e. bTwinning). Didactic education is going to become even more important, as citizens of all ages call for greater relevance in public services, which support and extend their values beyond the classroom.

## **REFERENCES**

- Al-Hawamdeh, S. (2002). Knowledge management: Re-thinking information management and facing the challenge of managing tacit knowledge. *Information Research*, 8(1), 8–1.
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2001). Odd couple: Making sense of the curious concept of knowledge management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 38(7), 995–1018. doi:10.1111/1467-6486.00269
- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (2003). Learning to work creatively with knowledge. In De Corte, E., Verschaffel, L., Entwistle, N., & Merriënboer, J. V. (Eds.), *Powerful learning environments: Unravelling basic components and dimension*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science.



- Bishop, J. (2004). *The potential of persuasive technology for educating heterogeneous user groups*. (Unpublished MSc). University of Glamorgan. Pontypridd.
- Cameron, D. (2009). *The big society*. Paper presented at the Hugo Young Lecture, Davis, J. L., & Harrison, S. S. (2001). *Edison in the boardroom: How leading companies realize value from their intellectual assets*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Després, C., Vachon, G., & Fortin, A. (2011). Implementing transdisciplinarity: Architecture and urban planning at work. *Transdisciplinary Knowledge Production in Architecture and Urbanism*, 11, 33–49. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-0104-5\_3
- Dinham, A., & Shaw, M. (2011). Measurement as reflection in faith-based social action. *Community Development Journal*, 47(1).
- Egbu, C. O. (2004). Managing knowledge and intellectual capital for improved organizational innovations in the construction industry: An examination of critical success factors. *Engineering, Construction, and Architectural Management*, 11(5), 301–315. doi:10.1108/09699980410558494
- Finger, M. (1994). From knowledge to action? exploring the relationships between environmental experiences, learning, and behavior. *The Journal of Social Issues*, 50(3), 141–160. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1994.tb02424.x
- Hawkins, J. N. (1988). The transformation of education for rural development in China. *Comparative Education Review*, 32(3), 266–281. doi:10.1086/446777
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. London, UK: Prentice Hall.
- Lewis, D. (2011). *There is no crisis of civic participation: The big society risks undermining the integrity of both state and civil society*. British Politics and Policy at LSE.
- Paavola, S., Lipponen, L., & Hakkarainen, K. (2004). Models of innovative knowledge communities and three metaphors of learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(4), 557–576. doi:10.3102/00346543074004557
- Pharoah, C. (2011). Private giving and philanthropy—Their place in the big society. *People. Place & Policy Online*, 5(2), 65–75. doi:10.3351/ppp.0005.0002.0003
- Porter, M. (1996). What is strategy? *Harvard Business Review*, 74(4), 61.
- Sanera, M., & Shaw, J. S. (1999). *Facts, not fear: Teaching children about the environment*. The Fraser Institute.
- Stewart, T. A. (1997). *Intellectual capital*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Taylor, B., Mathers, J., Atfield, T., & Parry, J. (2011). What are the challenges to the big society in maintaining lay involvement in health improvement, and how can they be met? *Journal of Public Health*, 33(1), 5. doi:10.1093/pubmed/fdr005
- Tsevreni, I. (2011). Towards an environmental education without scientific knowledge: An attempt to create an action model based on children's experiences, emotions and perceptions about their environment. *Environmental Education Research*, 17(1), 53–67. doi:10.1080/13504621003637029
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1930). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA.

## **ADDITIONAL READING**

Coyle, A. (2007). *Nuts and bolts: How to start a food co-op*. London, UK: The Conservative Co-operative Movement.

Davies, W. (2009). *Reinventing the firm*. London, UK: Demos.

Haynes, T., Brzezinski, P., & Morrison, L. (2010). *Co-operatives in the big society*. London, UK: Simon Randall.

Kyttä, M. (2003). *Children in outdoor contexts: Affordances and independent mobility in the assessment of environmental child friendliness*. (Doctor of Philosophy, Helsinki University of Technology).

Miller, E., & Buys, L. (2009). *Is generation X the new civic generation? An exploratory analysis of social capital, environmental attitudes and behaviours in an Australian community*.

Norman, J. (2010). *The big society: The anatomy of the new politics*. Buckingham, UK: The University of Buckingham Press.

Oborne, P. (2011). *The big society: Cameron and Clegg: The first 100 days*.

Randall, S., Norman, J., & Morrison, L. (2011). *Conservative co-operative movement*. Retrieved from <http://www.conservativecoops.com>

Rodgers, D. (2009). *New foundations: Unlocking the potential of affordable homes*. London, UK: The Co-operative Party.

Sanera, M., & Shaw, J. S. (1999). *Facts, not fear: Teaching children about the environment*. The Fraser Institute.

Wells, P., Gilbertson, J., & Gore, T. (2010). *Measuring the big society: Approaches, problems and suggested improvements*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Hallam University Press.

Wise, G., & Erbmann, R. (2009). *Co-operatives on campus: A mutual approach for students' unions*.