The Co-operative Party and New Labour: a study of policy entrepreneur influence

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Abstract

The Co-operative Party, which represents the interests and ideas of the co-operative movement in British politics, has been the sister party of UK Labour since 1927. Largely ignored by scholarship, it has been on occasion the third-largest party grouping in the House of Commons and represents a social movement with formal members numbering in the millions. The unusual Labour/Co-operative relationship was tested during the New Labour period, with the Co-operative Party gradually establishing itself as a trusted sidekick and a source of policy ideas, despite some initial tensions. This article examines two historical instances where the party proved decisive in influencing public policy; the "Thomas Bill" in 2001-02, and the creation of Co-operative Schools during the 2007-2010 Brown premiership. In each case, the activities of Co-operative Party-linked 'policy entrepreneurs' were key in the manufacture and exploitation of 'windows of opportunity' for policy change. The paper makes two core conclusions, one empirical: that the Co-operative Party was able to influence New Labour's public policy direction in keeping with its founding objectives. The second is theoretical: that recent trends in Multiple Streams Analysis are reinforced, and that in smaller policy 'subsystems', skilled policy entrepreneurs can play a greater role in the creation of windows of opportunity for policy change than the original theory implies.

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Introduction

The Co-operative Party is an independent political party dedicated to the defence and furtherance of co-operatives and the ideas they represent (Carberry 1969; Rosen, 2007; Kippin, 2018; Kippin, 2019; Whitecross, 2015). Founded in 1917 as a distinctly centre-left and working class voice in the years following the expansion of the electoral franchise to working men, it retains a status as a curious and distinctive part of the UK political furniture today. For the majority of its history - since 1927 - it has cohabited with the UK Labour Party in an unusual partnership. In recent times, 'joint candidates' have been selected and - if elected - represent both parties in office (Co-operative Party, 2020).

For much of the 20th and 21st centuries, there have been large numbers of Labour and Co-operative Members of the UK Parliament, ranging from single figures in the early 1980s to the 2017-2019 high point of 38 (Co-operative Party, 2021). In recent years, Co-operative politicians have been elected to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Senedd (and forerunner Assembly), the London Assembly, and local councils. Today, they are even joined by directly-elected Mayors. In short, the Co-operative Party has enjoyed considerable *numerical* presence in UK politics, comfortably eclipsing parties such as the Greens and UKIP in terms of the numbers of elected members that bear their name in this narrow respect, if not name recognition and notoriety. Its relationship with Labour enables Co-operative Party politicians to occupy frontbench, and when Labour is in government, ministerial office, as was the case fleetingly throughout the 20th century and more frequently during the New Labour period.

Alongside the Labour Party link, the Co-operative Party enjoys a second broad formal institutional relationship with the wider UK co-operative movement of member-owned businesses and organisations. This membership reaches - at least on paper - into the millions, and creates an unusual dynamic whereby a small political party represents a large movement, in combination with a large political party (Labour), which itself represents a large and influential set of membership organisations (the trade unions). This creates both opportunities and constraints. The former can be found in the shape of the resources, reach, breadth, and familiarity of linked brands such as the Co-operative Group supermarkets, and proximity to one of only two plausible challengers for the leadership of UK governments. Constraints can be identified in the party's subordinate and dependent role in both of its key institutional relationships (Stewart, 2011; Whitecross, 2015; Kippin, 2019).

Ultimately, the Co-operative Party exists to represent the material interests of the co-operative movement and broader ideology of co-operation (Carberry, 1969; Vorberg-Rugh and Whitecross, 2016). This has traditionally taken the form of the party advocating for greater recognition for the movement - in terms of its status in law - and material or legislative support for cooperative organisations (Rosen, 2007; Kippin, 2019). An additional interest has been in advocacy of consumers, with the Co-operative Party often adopting the role as the political guardian of the consumer interest, and the trade union movement voicing the interests of the producer (Co-operative Party, 1992; 1993a; 1993d). It has often been associated with the right or centre of the Labour Party, emphasising for instance co-operative ownership over state ownership or more broadly the need to chart a course between statism and the vagaries of the free market (Co-operative Party, 1992; 1993b; 1993c; 1997; 2005).

More recently, the Co-operative Party has become associated with a body of ideas known as 'mutualism', which emphasises the role of mutuality, reciprocity, and ownership in politics. It has taken two primary forms; The first is '[an] alternative form of economic organisation, namely common ownership of the means of production. In this instance, companies are owned as mutuals in order to give employees a greater stake, ensuring that workers are able to share in the fruits of profitability and growth' (Diamond, 2011, p.7). The second has referred to a reshaping of public services to provide greater input, ownership, to service users and staff (Ibid). Labour politicians have advocated these two strands to differing extents and enthusiasm based on their ideological preference or faction, with this often mirroring or emerging from philosophical and ideological divides within the centre left on the respective role of the state and market (Diamond, 2011; Birchall, 2012b; Kippin, 2019; Kellner, 1998). As such, the language of mutualism can, and has been, adapted to suit either egalitarian, 'third way', or neoliberal perspectives.

Mutualism was an identifiable influence on the public policy of the New Labour period. However it was far from dominant, coexisting with other more visible ideological approaches (Birchall, 2012a; 2012b; Kippin, 2019). The Co-operative Party can claim some credit for this, following their adoption and promotion of the term during the early New Labour period (Kippin, 2019; Kellner, 1998). More broadly, this era is one which provides an opportunity to assess the role and influence of the Co-operative Party in terms of its ability to affect the policy agenda of a Labour government during a time of advantageous circumstances, which can be identified in four key respects. Firstly, the Labour Party enjoyed an unprecedented parliamentary majority from 1997 to 2005, and a large one from 2005 to 2010. Secondly, the ascendent New Labour 'wing' of the party was in many respects 'in tune' with the ideology of the Co-operative Party, with each emphasising a rejection of statist 'Old Labour' and neoliberal

Thatcherite ideologies, with the Co-operative Party historically seeking to '[bridge] the socialist and capitalist worlds' (Stewart, 2011, p. 138; Co-operative Party, 2005). Thirdly, the broader context in which policy was made during this period was (at least until 2008) took place against a relatively benign economic backdrop in which public spending increased and the economy grew. Fourthly, and finally, the Co-operative Party had increased firstly the number of candidates it had supported and consequently the number of MPs it had elected to the House of Commons considerably from 14 in 1992 to 28 in 1997 (again increasing to 31 in 2001 and remaining steady despite considerable seat losses at 28 in 2005). As a result, the Co-operative Party had never had such a platform to demonstrate its ability to further the co-operative cause, either ideologically or materially, than New Labour. In this sense, the relationship was tested, providing an opportunity to assess its utility during a period in which it may be expected to function well.

There were, however, constraints on the Co-operative Party which were specific to this period. The Co-operative Party had recently undergone a period of transition which had attracted negative attention within the broader Labour Party and led to a change of General Secretary (the role most analogous to that of a leader) (Bailey, 2016, Interview Transcript; Hunt, 2016; Interview Transcript). Secondly, the co-operative movement's broader image arguably clashed with the emphasis on modernity and new leadership[2]. Thirdly, and relatedly, the Co-operative Party did not have much to offer by way of policy interventions which tallied with the incoming Labour government's policy agenda, focusing almost at the expense of all else on asking the Labour Party to adopt an all-encompassing flagship 'Co-operative Bill' which lacked definition and coherence, according to multiple interviewees (explored in greater depth below).

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[2] Peter Hunt, the former General Secretary of the Co-operative Party described the Co-operative movement's image as being 'seen as old, in a rocking chair, in an old cardigan, with holes in the elbows (Hunt, Interview Transcript, 2016).

These more specific context dependent constraints must be seen in the context of broader institutional constraints, the most notable of which is the lack of formal power or voice within the official structures of the Labour when compared to a trade union or other affiliated organisation (which can vote at the party's annual conference and stand for election to the party's National Executive Committee), the price of the Co-operative Party's independence (Stewart, 2011, p.139). The maintenance of this independence has been a priority, with the Co-operative Party jealously guarding its autonomy against occasional Labour Party attempts to encourage affiliation at the local and national level, and trade union hostility to the embodiment of an anti-statist ideology within the Labour Party (ibid).

Another important contextual feature was the presence of other, often stronger, ideological currents within New Labour. While the extent to which New Labour was 'neoliberal' is debated (Gibbs and Kippin, 2018; Fielding, 2001; Atkins, 2016), it is beyond dispute that its guiding lights saw the deployment of free market based solutions as a key part of its policy arsenal. The Co-operative Party's ideas were not necessarily antithetical to this. However success would only follow once they had begun to strategically select their interventions, and to present their vision as largely congruous with New Labour's (even where motives arguably diverged).

Over the New Labour period, the Co-operative Party developed a strategy by which it would identify opportunities for collaboration with key policymakers, mimicking an 'advocacy' think tank in its activities (Kippin, 2018; Kippin, 2019; Burnham, 2001). This strategy was institutionalised in the form of Mutuo, the Co-operative Party's in-house think tank, which established itself as a source of policy ideas in areas such as health reform. Kippin (2018) identifies this strategic shift as having its origin in the creation of Supporters Direct in 1998,

an organisation which sought to assist football fans in organising, purchasing a stake in, and ultimately purchasing football clubs. The Co-operative Party played a decisive role in attaching their preferred solution to the problems which had emerged in football governance during the 1990s (Ibid).

This article seeks to assess the influence of the Co-operative Party during the New Labour period by looking at two later (and arguably more substantive) cases. While it does not run the rule over the totality of the party's influence during the period, it seeks to draw lessons from two significant instances in which policy influence can be identified. It focuses on occasions in which the former was able to persuade the latter to adopt its policy ideas more or less wholesale. These are, firstly, the Industrial and Provident Society Act 2002 - a piece of Private Members' Legislation known as "The Thomas Bill" which altered (and from the point of view of the co-operative movement greatly improved) the regulation of co-operative businesses in the UK. The second is the case of Co-operative schools, a form of secondary education comprehensive school in England which utilises a co-operative-like structure and which emerged from cooperative movement engagement with successive governments programmes of education reform from 2001 onwards (Woodin, 2012; 2019. These two cases also mirror both the Co-operative Party's foundational aims of (i) advocating for the interests of co-operative enterprise in the political sphere, and (ii) seeking to more broadly apply the philosophy and ideology of co-operation to matters of public policy (Vorberg-Rugh and Whitecross, 2016).

The "Thomas" Bill is chosen as a case study because it demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of the Labour and Co-operative relationship, symbolically seeing the relinquishment of grandiose aims of flagship legislation in favour of a minor legislative tweak.

Co-operative schools show the value of Co-operative MPs achieving senior Government posts – but also points to the relationship's limitations. Both demonstrate the 'story' of the Co-operative Party's engagement with New Labour in policymaking terms: the need to package or frame its policymaking ideas in a way which caused as little deviation from the Government's extant agenda as possible. Perhaps more importantly, they are each policy interventions which interviewees repeatedly highlighted as significant in identifying, typifying, and illustrating the role of the Co-operative Party during the New Labour period. Both cases are explored in greater depth by Kippin (2019) alongside case studies which focus on NHS Foundation Trusts and Hospitals (where the Co-operative Party played a role in legitimating controversial healthcare reforms through highlighting the 'mutual' nature of the reforms) and Supporters Direct (where the Co-operative Party defined a new tactical approach to influencing policy change through engagement in the issue of professional football governance) (Kippin, 2017; 2019).

Multiple Streams Analysis (Kingdon, 1984; Zahariadis, 2007; Cairney, 2018) is suitable for analysing these case studies owing to its focus on the interlinking relationship between problem definition, policy availability, and policymaker (political) motive, and the centrality of policy entrepreneurs. The framework, which has been adopted in hundreds of case studies (Cairney and Jones, 2016) has been refined through the testing of its core propositions in empirical and theoretical studies. One moderation of the theory is that - contra the original assumptions of the model - that in a smaller policy subsystem, serendipity and chance may play a smaller role in opening policy 'windows of opportunity' than Kingdon assumed, and individual or organisational agency assumes (Kingdon, 1984; Zahariadis, 2007; Cairney, 2018). This article seeks to contribute to these debates, focusing on the extent to which questions of scale and salience influence the extent to which policy entrepreneurs can prove decisive in effecting policy change.

The article begins with a contextualisation of the Labour and Co-operative Party's relationship heading into the New Labour period, describing its historical evolution and identifying some recurrent tensions and describing some structural features of the relationship. It moves on to introduce Multiple Streams Analysis and to describe its core features and assumptions. This section highlights the important role played by policy entrepreneurs in exercising the agency described above. It then introduces the first case study on the Industrial and Provident Society Act of 2002, describing the availability of a policy idea (in the form of the measures proposed by the Co-operative Party for a 'Co-operatives Bill'), the various policymaker incentives (in the form of the annual 'ballot' of MPs who then propose pieces of legislation) (Hazell and Reid, 2018), and the definition of two relevant policy problems (the need to appease the Co-operative Party as a party stakeholder, and to create a 'level playing field' for co-operative enterprises (Rosen, 2007; Kippin, 2019, Snaith, 2009). It then moves on to the second case study under examination; Co-operative Schools. This follows a similar structure. It identities the existence of a policy problem related to internal Labour Party politics; the development of a policy solution in the form of the Co-operative structure for a school (paying particular attention to the Co-operative Party's role in that development); and the political opportunity which emerged (centring on the role of Ed Balls as the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families).

The article draws upon the author's PhD research and includes data from a series of semi-structured elite stakeholder interviews with key figures carried out between 2016 and 2018 and analysed during the same period (see Kippin, 2019 for more information about research design, and Richards, 1996 for details of how preparation was carried out). The interviewees are named, with one exception (in each case reflecting interviewee preferences) and more

exhaustive statements can be found in the aforementioned thesis. The article also draws upon relevant political documents such as Co-operative Party manifestos, policy papers, internal documents and correspondence, and press releases which were gathered from the Co-operative Party archive in Manchester, England and online. While this material is largely omitted from the narrative here, it nonetheless contributes to the formulation of the conclusions.

The case studies examined here were selected as they provide an opportunity to broaden our understanding of the Co-operative and Labour Party relationship. While they both focus on the national level of UK politics, they do so in relatively low-salience policy issues. The first - the case of the adoption of the Industrial and Provident Society Act 2002 - represented in policy terms a technical fix, but one which had taken on a high degree of importance to certain policy entrepreneurs. The second, the case of Co-operative schools, was a higher salience issue (that of schools reform) but one which took place with low visibility and with key developments occurring during implementation. These cases provide an opportunity to test the proposition that policy entrepreneurs can be more influential in low attention contexts and environments.

Ultimately, the article makes two conclusions, the first of which is empirical: that the Co-operative Party in each case played a decisive role in influencing public policy in its chosen direction, in a manner consistent with its longstanding overarching goals. This, it is argued, demonstrates the utility of the unusual relationship between the two parties and contributes to our knowledge of the Co-operative and Labour parties, as well as the British system of policymaking more broadly. The second conclusion is theoretical: that in smaller policy subsystems, policy entrepreneurs can play an outsize role in creating windows of opportunities, though the precise nature of this role may vary in nature between low and high-salience policy

areas. Finally, it reinforces the importance of luck, timing, and serendipity in creating opportunities for policy change.

Multiple streams and policy entrepreneurs

Following its popularisation by Kingdon (1984), Multiple Streams Analysis has become a highly popular and influential theoretical approach in the understanding of policymaking. It has been cited hundreds of times, being utilised in case studies covering an array of policy developments across a range of different political systems and levels of government (Cairney and Jones, 2016). Given this, it is unsurprising that scholars value its flexibility. However some have cautioned against using it superficially, or failing to take account of the theoretical refinement that has emerged from this intensive and broad empirical testing of the core features of the theory (Cairney, 2018; Cairney and Jones, 2016; Aviram et al, 2020).

The core features of the model are the problem, policy, and politics streams, policy entrepreneurs, and windows of opportunity for policy change. In the problem stream, attention shifts to a problem. This may be because of a 'focusing event' or a vacillation in the 'public mood' (Kingdon, 1984; Zahairidas, 2003; 2007). Only a tiny proportion of policy problems receive attention from policymakers, and Kingdon highlights the serendipity of which problems are defined as sufficiently pressing as to merit policymaker attention. The identification of such problems is a political process in which power is exercised, rather than one in which policymakers exercise objective judgement to pick the most pressing issues based on a scientific reading of the evidence. Powerful actors can strongly influence which problems are seen as such, with huge implications for the way policy is made (Cairney, 2012; Lukes; 2005).

In the policy stream, ideas 'float around', waiting to be plucked out. In Kingdon's phrase, this floating occurs in a thick brew of 'policy primeval soup' where ideas 'soften' and are subject to modification and refinement by policy community members. The ideas come 'from anywhere', and may be, to borrow the language of a different model of policy change, developed by advocacy coalitions, pressure participants, or social movements (Jordan *et al*, 1994; Sabatier, 1997). The solutions that are ladled from this soup are those which have been 'narrowed down to a subset of ostensibly feasible options' (Beland and Howlett, 2016, p.222).

In the politics stream, policymakers may be incentivised to make certain decisions. They may do so with one eye on the *national mood* or the public's receptivity to the particular definition of a problem, or the policy solution selected (Kingdon, 1984; Zahariadis, 2007). Policymakers are more or less receptive to certain policy ideas at different times (and indeed the identity of those policymakers might change, owing to an election), and this variety may come from 'the national mood, pressure group campaigns, and administrative or legislative turnover' (Zahariadis, 1999, p.76). In other words, the viability of ideas rises and falls owing to the gamut of circumstances beyond their control. Policymakers may also be more or less responsive to certain policy ideas and problem definition arising from their ideology, or their perception of their political interests. The limitless variety in policymaker incentives is a major source of unpredictability and serendipity, which permeate the policymaking process.

Windows of opportunity occur when the three 'streams' collide, or 'couple'. Success is more likely when all three streams are coupled, according to Zahairadis (2007, p.78). Separate streams can come together at critical times and create policy change. In Kingdon's words, 'a problem is recognised, a solution is developed and available in the policy community, a

political change makes it the right time for policy change, and potential constraints are not severe [...] these policy windows, the opportunities for action on given initiatives, present themselves and stay open for only short periods.' (1984, p.174). In other words, most are open only fleetingly, before attention shifts elsewhere, a solution declines in feasibility, or a policymaker's incentive is removed by circumstance. Many such windows are not exploited (Zahairidas, 2007; Kingdon, 1984). While the 'window of opportunity' metaphor seems apt, Cairney has persuasively characterised this moment as more akin to a shuttle launch, where every tiny detail has to be in order before take-off can commence (2008, p.202).

When policy change does occur, it is oftentimes the result of policy entrepreneurs exploiting windows of opportunity. They are the central figures, or 'heroes' of the Multiple Streams story, lurking and operating across the streams and agitating for policy change to occur (Kingdon, 1984; Cairney, 2018, p.200). According to Zahariadis (2008, p.521) 'analysis of entrepreneurial activity is normally divided in two parts: attributes and strategies', with scholars highlighting the significance of both. They can be the leaders of interest groups, elected politicians, official or unofficial spokespeople, celebrities, or business figures. They are 'individuals willing to invest time, energy, reputation, money - to promote a position for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits' (Kingdon, 1984, p.179). Kingdon describes them as 'surfers waiting for the big wave', suggesting they exploit - rather than create - opportunities for policy change.

Several recurring policy entrepreneur strategies can be identified. Most notable amongst these are problem framing, network utilisation and expansion, working with advocacy coalitions, leadership by example, and scaling up change processes (Mintrom and Norman, 2009; Mintrom, 2019). Cairney, similarly, identifies the successful habits of policy entrepreneurs,

and finds an ability by skilled policy entrepreneurs to 'move the streams', particularly in smaller policy subsystems such as at the subnational level (Cairney, 2018). Studies show they are capable of operating across the three streams in creating and exploiting windows of opportunity, and even going beyond this to create impetus in all three streams. Oborn *et al* for instance describe, in their study of health policy entrepreneurship in London government, a policy entrepreneur propensity 'not only in opening policy windows but also yoking together a network to make policy agendas happen' (2011, p.326). In other words, the original theory underestimated the ability of skilled entrepreneurs to exercise agency in heavily influencing policy outcomes - with differences notable in different political systems and policymaking contexts.

A relevant question here is the extent to which organisations such as the Co-operative Party can be counted as policy entrepreneurs, with Mintrom arguing 'to the extent that collective entities consistently and effectively nurture and train professional staff who promote policy innovation, then it would seem reasonable to call such entities policy entrepreneurs' (2019, p. 308). Recent policy entrepreneur scholarship reflects the variety of individuals, networks, and organisations who participate constructively in the policy process. Some identify organisations who act as entrepreneurs (Carter and Jacobs, 2013) and at times play a dual role as entrepreneurs and policymakers. Others describe identify the role of policy entrepreneurs 'not only in opening policy windows but also yoking together a network to make policy agendas happen' (Oborn et al, 2011, p. 326).

The status of those individuals within the constellation of organisations that make up the Labour and Co-operative movements is worthy of brief examination in this context. While some individuals act directly and exclusively on behalf of the Co-operative Party (most

notably Peter Hunt and Co-operative Party colleagues) the role of Labour MPs is more ambiguous. For instance, Gareth Thomas, represents the classic 'committed co-operator' envisaged by the Co-operative Party's founders, emerging from the structures of the Co-operative Party and movement. Research carried out by Kippin in 2017 found a wide divergence in the extent to which Labour and Co-operative MPs between 2010 and 2015 invoked the co-operative movement or co-operative ideas, with Thomas doing so 128 times (the most in the sample of 10 analysed) but one contemporary doing so only once (Kippin, 2016). Ed Balls, meanwhile, is more ambiguous. While he openly wore the Co-operative label during his political career, his primary loyalty appears to have been to the Labour Party and the Government he served, with his link to the Co-operative Party representing a recognition of a working relationship which emerged while he was a Senior Advisor to Gordon Brown. In other words, the policy entrepreneurs identified here enjoy different degrees of fealty and proximity to the Co-operative Party.

Given this ambiguity, a focus on individuals is adopted here and viewed as more appropriate for three reasons. Firstly, some participants in this process played a dual role as both an agitator for change, and a policymaker. Furthermore, this ambiguity is at the core of understanding the Co-operative Party's role in these cases. Secondly, the Co-operative Party enjoys little formal leverage over the Labour Party, and therefore the individuals acting on its behalf's individual qualities, networks, and influence come into play. Thirdly, interviewees for this project repeatedly pointed to the role of these crucial *individuals* in explaining eventual *organisational* outcomes. Hence, the formulation preferred here is that individual policy entrepreneurs acted on behalf of the institutional Co-operative Party, interpreting, reformulating, rescaling, and pursuing its overriding objectives within a changing context and complex policymaking and political environment.

It is argued below that the two case studies further reinforce a core insight which emerges from applications of Multiple Streams Analysis and scholarship which focuses on policy entrepreneurs: that they are able in smaller policy subsystems to exact a higher degree of influence over the creation and exploitation of a window of opportunity for policy change than the original Kingdonian language of the theory suggests (Oborn *et al*, 2011; Cairney, 2008, Aviram et al, 2019)**.** However, they also confirm an original Multiple Streams insight: the importance of serendipity or of chance **(**Kingdon, 1984; Zahariadis, 2003**)** which can be identified here in the unpredictability of the substance and timing of certain important contextual factors. In each case, the policy entrepreneur exploitation of developments in one stream was key in creating the impetus for policy changes in the others, with policy entrepreneurs often exploiting opportunities of their own creation. This article now moves on to the first of the case studies under investigation to test the proposition that policy entrepreneurs linked to, emerging from, and acting on behalf of the Co-operative Party were decisive in creating and exploiting a window of opportunity for policy change. Furthermore, it is argued that these policy entrepreneurs played a key role in adapting, interpreting, and rescaling Co-operative Party policy ideas which emerged from longstanding party goals. Prior to the examination of the case studies, this article now provides some historical context about the Labour and Co-operative Party relationship.

The Labour and Co-operative relationship

The Co-operative Party was founded in 1917 as a result of perceived Government hostility to the co-operative movement (Rosen, 2007). This was despite the movement historically placing a strong emphasis on staying out of formal politics. Co-operative Party candidates

were selected owing to their status as true co-operators (Carbery, 1969). The Labour and Co-operative parties overlapped considerably in their programme, ideology, and the profile of their electorates. As such, co-operation between the two was present from the outset, with a series of formal bipartisan agreements setting the parameters for partnership (Carbery, 1969; Whitecross, 2015). By 1927, the two would not stand candidates against one another. By 1937, it was agreed that Co-operative MPs would be 'double badged' as 'Labour and Co-operative' (an arrangement which persists to this day). Subsequent agreements would respond to tensions which emerged between the two parties and the constellation of organisations represented by each. Throughout its history, the Co-operative Party has been successful in maintaining a 'separate identity from Labour, but struggled to develop a strong voice of its own' (Whitecross and Vorberg-Rugh, 2016).

The Co-operative Party occupied an unusual relationship vis-à-vis other members of the labour movement family, cultivating a jealously guarded independence, which was often resisted by the larger and more powerful Labour Party. Throughout the mid-20th century, tensions would centre on the Co-operative Party's desire to retain its independence, and the Labour Party's desire to encourage affiliation (Stewart, 2011; Whitecross, 2015). Tensions would emerge over specific items of policy, most notably the Labour government's desire to bring the Co-operative Insurance Society into public ownership (which was successfully resisted by the Co-operative Party and the broader movement). Such disharmony was also in evidence following the publication of the Report of the Co-operative Commission (the two main figures involved in which were Hugh Gaitskell and Anthony Crosland), which made recommendations which sat uneasily with the leadership of the UK's large co-operatives.

Ideological differences between the two parties were at times stark and were both publicly recognised and discussed. They were, however, often typical of broader debates within the Labour movement. The Co-operative Party - owing to its advocacy of voluntary organisation, democracy, and the rights of the consumer - found itself in opposition to the trade unions and Labour's left (Stewart, 2011), which were concerned with representation of the producer and ideologically committed to building state socialism.

While not wholly on the Labour Party's right, the Co-operative Party (as a result of the prominence of these beliefs) has tended to be seen as more ideologically sympathetic to the party's (not always congruous) pro-European and revisionist wings. As the unions became dominant within the Labour Party into the 1960s and '70s, the Co-operative Party found itself increasingly marginalised (along with the ideology it represented). That this trade union pre-eminence coincided with the decline of co-operative business further compounded matters.

While a disproportionate number of Labour and Co-operative MPs would go on to leave the party and join the nascent SDP, the institutions and leadership of the party remained loyal to Labour (Rosen, 2007; Stewart, 2011). This ultimately set the stage for a stronger relationship between the two, which not only rested upon a by now deep and entwined history, but a recent display of fealty at a time of existential threat to the party. This coincided with the Labour Party's gentle drift rightward under Kinnock and Smith, followed by the more abrupt lurch further in the same direction under Blair. While ideological tensions would continue during this period, the Co-operative Party found a more hospitable environment as the partnership glided towards power, growing its strength and credibility, alongside a resurgence in the cooperative movement linked to the emergence of fair trade and ethical consumerism (Wilson et al, 2011).

Heading into the New Labour period, the cap on the number of candidates the Co-operative Party could stand was lifted, symbolising the two parties' more comfortable coexistence and a recognition that the relationship now stood on firmer footing. This would result in Co-operative MPs not only reaching their highest total of 31 following the 2001 General Election but their highest percentage of representation in the Parliamentary Labour Party (both since surpassed). The New Labour period would, as this article goes on to show, harvest modest policy fruit for the Co-operative Party, above and beyond what had been achieved under previous Labour governments. Ultimately the relationship has persisted because neither side has had incentive enough to end it, while in recent years it has been of benefit to both.

Case study 1: The Industrial and Provident Societies Act 2002 (aka "the Thomas Bill")

Before discussing the actual legislation and private members' process in question, some context is important. From the 1990s onwards, the Co-operative Party had sought to persuade the Labour Party of the merits of adopting an all-encompassing Co-operative Bill (Rosen, 2007; Kippin, 2018; 2019). Input was sought from a range of co-operative movement stakeholders, who contributed draft provisions for the putative legislation (Kippin, 2019). Its adoption would represent appropriate reward for the Co-operative Party's steadfast loyalty to Labour throughout its tumultuous period in Opposition following the 1979 General Election (Stewart, 2011). The Bill, ultimately, would not be adopted owing to what is characterised by interviewees as its unwieldiness and incoherence, with interviewee Peter Hunt describing the bill as a 'rabbit hole of having only one thing to ask of Labour, which was a new Co-operatives Act. And you would struggle to find 2 people in the party who could articulate what was in it and what it was trying to achieve and what it was for.' (Peter Hunt, Interview Transcript, 2016).

Snaith meanwhile identified a '[Government] reluctance to allocate Parliamentary time for a Government Bill' for this purpose (2009: 1).

The bill itself was nebulous and ill-defined. Largely the work of the Co-operative Council, an apex body for the co-operative movement which brought together the Co-operative Union (representing consumer co-operatives), ICOM (representing worker co-operatives) and the main agricultural co-op and housing co-op organisations. (Snaith, n.d.). It sought to create a modern co-operative law, fit for the 21st Century which would create a more stable and advantageous environment for cooperatives across the movement. The Executive Summary of a contemporaneous IPPR report captures of the spirit of the enterprise, proposing:

'The framing of a single Co-operative Societies Act to replace the Industrial and Provident Societies Act as the basis for the registration and supervision of co-operatives, sufficiently broadly drawn to encompass all existing co-operatives law however registered, and designed to keep abreast of developments both in Company and in EC [European Commission] law; the establishment of a Co-operatives Commission or Commissioner under the Act to replace the Registrar of Friendly Societies as the sole regulatory authority for co-operatives and to play an active role in the promotion and development of co-operatives of all kinds [and] reconsideration of the treatment of equity in co-operatives within the framework of a new Co-operative Societies Act. (IPPR, quoted in Co-operative Council, 1995)

Besides key provisions concerning demutualisations and the Treasury's ability to change co-operative regulations, the Bill proposed the creation of a powerful Co-operatives Commissioner, regulations for the formation and registration of co-operatives, their legal capacity, membership, rules, shareholdings, management, administration, meetings, voting,

accounts and audits, supervision and protection, complaints and disputes, complaints and disputes pertaining to co-operatives and others (Co-operative Council, 1995). It was 'voluminous' and interviewees – perhaps benefiting from hindsight - were uniform in their criticism of its unwieldiness and unviability.

A twofold problem

The Co-operative Party perceived a need to solve two separate but related problems. The first was that co-operative businesses were vulnerable to 'demutualisation' - aka being bought out and taken out of the member-owned sector. The potential for this was not just hypothetical. The 'Regan affair', notorious within the co-operative sector, saw the hedge fund Lanica (owned by the titular Andrew Regan) attempt a 1997 hostile buyout of the Co-operative Retail Society, the UK's then-largest co-operative organisation (McCrystal, 2003). The UK's business regulatory framework provided few barriers to this, and eventually the Lanica attempt was thwarted owing to external circumstances and a media storm (Rosen, 2007; Snaith, 2015) Despite its failure, this represented a 'focusing event' (Kingdon, 1984; Zahairidas, 2017) in which attention shifts to a policy problem.

The second problem was more political in nature and resulted from the need for the Co-operative Party to salvage something from the wreckage of the 'Co-operatives Bill', described above. This discarded legislation had taken on a totemic status, representing a vindication of the Co-operative Party's relationship. For example, the notion that the co-operative movement 'benefited' from the existence of a dedicated political party at all, much less one so institutionally tied to the Labour Party, had always been a controversial one (Carberry, 1969; Whitecross, 2015, Rosen, 2007). A flagship piece of legislation, or so the thinking went, would

demonstrate this relevance and appropriateness. Adrian Bailey MP, for instance, argued that the enactment of such legislation would act as 'recognition of its influence within the Labour Party', and that this was not a 'clear, defined reason, or for a co-operative agenda' (Adrian Bailey, 2016, Interview Transcript).

To an extent, key actors within the Labour Party and government shared in each of these overarching concerns. While furthering the cause of co-operation would never be a key priority for most key New Labour and contemporary government policy actors, many influential figures were sympathetic for ideological, institutional, and political reasons. As a result, their potential contribution in some small way to the material interests and ideological preferences of the Co-operative Party (not least owing to the ongoing financial commitment made, via the Co-operative Party, to the Labour Party) held a certain appeal. In other words, senior policymakers did not possess enough of a *disincentive* to oppose small-scale regulatory change to benefit the co-operative movement.

The fruit that fell from the Co-operatives Bill tree

Appropriate policy solutions were available to address these problems. Multiple Streams theorists highlight the importance of policy availability in contributing to the opening of a window of opportunity for policy change (Zahairidas, 2007; 2012) with 'solutions' often chasing 'problems' (Béland and Howlett, 2016). Provisions from the discarded legislation included two which were arguably technically and politically feasible. The bill 'introduced a turnout requirement of 50% for demutualisation of societies and gave the Treasury power to change society law [...] by secondary legislation in line with future changes to Company Law. That power was used in 2006 to ease the audit requirements for small co-ops' (Snaith, 2015:

3). The quote below by then-Co-operative Party General Secretary Peter Hunt describes the relationship between the discarded Co-operatives Bill and the "Thomas Bill", pointing to the existence of a 'few key asks' which 'mattered to the funding organisations' from the 136-clause original bill (Peter Hunt, Interview Transcript, 2016). The criterion of technical feasibility was met easily owing to the nature of what amounted to two regulatory tweaks within UK company law. Political feasibility was evident given the low salience and public understanding of the issue. These were two changes of significant importance to actors in a particular sector, but not particularly beyond, granting a wide degree of discretion to policymakers.

Events here can be characterised as the failure of the broader Co-operatives Bill owing to reasons of political and technical feasibility, and the lack of a meaningfully policymaker incentive to commit such time and resources to flagship legislation. Subsequently, two key provisions were identified and repackaged, shifted to a different venue, and pursued by policy entrepreneurs acting under the banner of the Co-operative Party. This addressed the concerns over technical and political feasibility and opened the way of policy change to occur. The political dynamics by which the Thomas Bill emerged will be explored in the next section, which focuses on events in the politics stream.

Winning the policy lottery

Relevant policymakers had both motive and opportunity to turn the core regulatory provisions of the Co-operatives Bill into law, however, drawing the line between policy entrepreneurs and policymakers in this case is almost impossible. Gareth Thomas, the Labour MP for Harrow, was later to become the Chair of the Co-operative Party, but by this point was a Co-operative Party actor in his capacity as an elected party representative for London. Meanwhile, other

members of Parliament and government advisors played simultaneous roles as policymakers and policy entrepreneurs, using their influence to further the cause of the bill from within the system.

Kingdon (1984) highlights the importance of serendipity and luck in creating windows of opportunity for policy change. Most, according to Kippin and Cairney 'use [Multiple Streams] metaphorically to highlight the serendipitous events and choices that contribute [...]' to policy change (2021, p.5). Serendipity was in evidence here in the form of the House of Commons private members' ballot, whereby MPs can - if they put their names forward come in a high enough position in the periodic 'draw' - propose legislation which has a reasonable chance of passing, if it can gain Government support. Gareth Thomas came in a sufficiently high position in this ballot, and the Co-operative Party utilised this to propose a bill which enacted the two provisions described above. Thomas, in agreeing to sponsor the legislation, worked within the Co-operative and Labour parties and broader labour movement to build support, and to ensure active government support.

The support of the government can be evidenced by the account provided in interview by Ed Balls, latterly a Cabinet Minister but at this point the Chief Economic Advisor to Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He would later become a Labour and Co-operative MP, serving in this capacity for 10 years between 2005 and 2015. He was joined in this advocacy by Tommy McAvoy, a Labour and Co-operative MP and senior Government Whip. Balls characterised the original Co-operatives Bill's failure as being related to a lack of government time available for legislation but pointed out that there is 'quite a lot of time allotted to Private Members' Bills, and if the government is… Supportive' (Balls, 2017, Interview Transcript). Gareth Thomas highlighted the importance of a 'key supporter in the

Whips Office in Tommy McAvoy [who] was able to do was to communicate broad support from across the Labour Party for the legislation which again helped you know underline to officials, Andrew Smith [the Chief Secretary to the Treasury], and crucially [gain] Gordon [Brown]'s support (Gareth Thomas, 2016, Interview Transcript). This government support was crucial in passing the legislation, as many private members' bills fail owing to a government refusal to approve the requisite funding measures, or allowing the bill to be 'talked out' or 'filibustered' (Bowler, 2010).

Entrepreneurs opening and climbing through windows

The case above confirms observations from Multiple Streams studies: that in smaller policy subsystems, policy entrepreneurs can play a large role in working across the three to create, and latterly exploit, a window of opportunity. Table 1 gives a non-exhaustive account of the roles of policy entrepreneurs in this case, with a focus on those named in this article. A key entrepreneur in this case was Peter Hunt, the then-General Secretary of the Co-operative Party, who identified the opportunity for policy change following the private members ballot, developed and refined an existing policy solution in the form of the key provisions of the Co-operatives Bill, and built a shared understanding with policymakers as to the pressing nature of the policy problem. In this, he worked in close partnership with Gareth Thomas and others, creating a close-knit 'team' of the kind described by Mintrom (2019) and Mintrom and Norman (2009).

[Table 1 Goes here]

The decision to travel down the private members' route would be reprised when Labour and Co-operative MPs featured high in the private members' ballot, with other discarded measures from the Co-operatives Bill becoming law (Snaith, 2015). Eventually, as part of a 'tidying up' exercise, the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition would repeal the Thomas Bill, but retain its provisions in an overarching Co-operatives Act (Wardle, 2012). The cumulative effect of this was to demonstrate that the Labour and Co-operative alliance was capable of producing meaningful results for the co-operative movement and providing strong arguments as to its utility. The "Thomas Bill" started this process. An anonymous interviewee argued that while 'a lot of it was down to luck, but the thing about luck is that it comes your way and it's what you make of it and that legislation and the dream team that was Gareth and Peter Hunt, created a huge amount of goodwill within the co-op movement' (Anonymous, 2017, Interview Transcript). While policy entrepreneur skill was important, so too was luck - but policy entrepreneurs still have to exploit that luck.

Case study 2: Co-operative schools

Co-operative schools represent a subversion of recent trends in secondary education policy in England, and yet also emerge from the structures created by phases of reform which created and responded to those trends. They are secondary schools which are structured along co-operative lines, and which have sought to situate an ethos of co-operative within the formal structure, operational culture, and external links of the school (Mills and Hextall, 2019; Woodin, 2019. Co-operative schools 'ostensibly aim to embed a set of wide-ranging values and principles: equality, equity, democracy, self-help, self-responsibility and solidarity as well as the principles of education, democratic control and community ownership (Woodin, 2019: 1). There are, at the time of writing some 850 schools which have at some point adopted this

model, though the number is thought to be significantly lower now. Woodin posits two explanations for this decline, either 'an inner defect in the SNA of co-operative schools' or 'external obstacles and an inhospitable climate have stifled their advance' (2019, p. 1166). Their emergence was characterised as a 'quiet revolution' in English education, and the speed of their uptake and the lack of ceremony which has accompanied it are equally noteworthy (Thorpe, 2011).

The Co-operative Party's involvement was crucial in several respects to the policy intervention. Policy entrepreneurs acting from within the party and on its behalf played a crucial role in both the development of the relevant policy idea, played a crucial role in creating a window of opportunity through identifying an opening for the co-operative provision of education. Finally, it engaged with the broader policy education network members, in order to expand the number and take up of the Co-operative school model, facilitating a process of policy diffusion within a policy subsystem. The below describes these policy entrepreneur activities through the three streams of policymaking as per the multiple streams approach.

[Table 2 goes here]

The problem with academy schools

Attention did not lurch to a particular problem to which the solution of Co-operative schools could be attached. Rather, a nascent resistance to them had emerged within both the Labour Party and trade union movement, on the one hand, and that portion of the broader education policy community which felt that the deviation from the traditional comprehensive model was normatively unattractive. Academy schools had emerged as a means of improving

underperforming city centre schools, emphasising a now familiar admixture of independence from local government, private sector involvement, and greater freedoms over curriculum and other elements of school operation (Adonis, 2012). They represented a progression of recent trends in education reform in England, which had seen the introduction of different school models with different degrees of speciality and independence within the compulsory education system. This can be characterised as a fragmentation of the system, with a high degree of variety evident in English secondary education (Chitty, 2013).

Co-operative schools represented a model of education reform which appealed to traditional Labour sensibilities. For instance, the language of co-operation contrasted with the emphasis on 'competition' that often accompanied advocacy of City Academies. Public services reform had been a theatre in the '*TB-GB*' wars between the outgoing Prime Minister Tony Blair and the incoming Gordon Brown, with the latter and his supporters often associated with a degree of scepticism towards the New Public Management influenced reforms that Academy Schools represented (Richards, 2003). This is reflected in changes made by the Government following the 2007 change in Premiership to alter the sponsorship requirements for academies in order to reduce the emphasis on businesses and broaden the pool to include organisations like charities and universities.

Attractive and available

Policy entrepreneurs acting on behalf of the Co-operative Party played a crucial role in the enactment and creation of the Co-operative Schools idea. This took two forms. Firstly, figures such as Mervyn Wilson and Peter Hunt first developed and latterly refined the policy idea. This took the form of engaging with relevant stakeholders, research organisations, think tanks, and

individual campaigners and researchers to refine the relationship between education provision and co-operativism. A second role was ultimately more consequential, with Co-operative Party policy entrepreneurs - in many cases the self-same individuals - again active in encouraging and facilitating its take-up and engaging in a process of diffusion through the apparatus of the education system. Regarding the former, this process took place over several years, evolving from an initial attempt to infuse education provision with co-operative values to a concern with how to best exploit the new opportunities that were opening up within a fragmenting and diversifying education system (Chitty, 2013). A comment below from Mervyn Wilson illustrates this and is worth reproducing at length:

Peter Hunt with the Co-op Party and Mutuo had already started looking at the potential for new areas of cooperative and social enterprise in the context of the government's ongoing public sector reform agenda. [...] I wrote a chapter [for a think tank publication] that flew the kite about why not running schools as co-operatives [...]. When we took the draft to Peter, it was that chapter that he got really excited about. And asked me to go away and develop it. And I'll never forget the words "this is exactly the sort of radical stuff the government wants to hear" (Mervyn Wilson, Interview Transcript, 2017).

Today, there is a wide variety in the extent to which co-operative insights dictate the structure and operation of the school. However, most (and in keeping with the original design) have adopted a stakeholder board made up of representatives of the local community, and organisations such as churches and universities (Woodin, 2012; 2019; Facer *et al,* 2012; Thorpe, 2011). Furthermore, co-operative values feature in the curriculum and the day-to-day operation of the school, for example partnering with local co-operatives for school food services. The process of diffusion is in part a result of the 'proselytising' of the Co-operative

Party, but also of the attractiveness of a model which allows many education leaders an alternative to academisation. Later developments in English secondary education would see the Coalition government strongly promote - and at times appear to enforce - the shift to academies (Ingram, 2016). Co-operative schools, and the creation of geographically based Co-operative school networks - provided an opportunity to protect existing ways of working and to engage in a model of education provision which represented less of a departure from the traditional comprehensive and local education authority model (Woodin, 2019; Mansell, 2011).

In interview, Mervyn Wilson identified some headteachers who 'really understood' the Co-operative model, and saw its adoption as a way of securing a legacy which allowed them to 'safeguard community and values for the future', with the Co-operative [school] model representing the 'closest thing they had to their traditional values'. Take up, he claimed, became 'like an infection' within geographical areas (Wilson, 2017, Interview Transcript).

Balls to it

The key figure in the emergence of Co-operative Schools is Ed Balls, who was the Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (DCSF) from 2007 to 2010. Balls was also a Labour and Co-operative MP, who had enjoyed an ongoing and productive relationship with key policy entrepreneurs within the Co-operative Party, most notably Peter Hunt. As a close ally of Gordon Brown, he had certain misgivings about the City Academies programme (as shown in the quotation below). However Brown had himself appointed Andrew Adonis - the key advisor most notably associated with Academies - to the same Department as a Junior Minister. As such, the ideological differences may have been overstated, and the two

appear to have struck up a productive working relationship, including on the issue of schools reform (Riddell and Hughes, 2016).

The presence of Balls at DCSF was crucial, and so too was his status as a Co-operative MP. In the words of the former Chair of the Co-operative Party Jim Lee, 'Ed Balls became Secretary of State for Children and Education, and suddenly there's an open door' (Lee, 2016, Interview Transcript). However, this perhaps oversimplifies both the complexity of the process by which Co-operative Schools were introduced, and the extent to which Ed Balls and other key education decision makers such as Jim Knight MP had a motive to adopt it. Rather, Balls appears to have needed to have been persuaded by the merit of the idea through the adoption of a pilot scheme which assessed the performance of the model, linked to the passage of the 2006 Education Act. Mervyn Wilson recounts a process by which sought to explore different ways that the trust school model created by the Act would operate. 'Through Peter, and the Co-operative Party and Mutuo, we advocated that there should be an additional pilot that enabled us to explore the possibility of multi-stakeholder co-operative models for the trust programme' (Mervyn Wilson, 2017, Interview Transcript). This was ultimately successful, and led the model being tested in schools in Hull and Stockport. The viability of the model proven, it began to grow in visibility and popularity.

Ed Balls was likely motivated by his belief in mutualism, as reflected by his membership of the Co-operative Party and his status as an ally of Gordon Brown, who was often attributed with scepticism towards elements of the Blair-led Government's pursuit of certain public service reforms (Richards, 2007). The presence of Balls in the Cabinet galvanised the Co-operative movement to take advantage of his presence, and to build upon and to accelerate the work that was quietly being done within co-operative movement networks. Ultimately, Balls's

advocacy of the model was to open the door to a process by which education practitioners operating within the secondary school system were able to adopt the model and ensure its growth, with variations in the extent to which cooperative insights define the activities, structure, and operational culture of the schools. In other words, the Co-operative Party played a role in implementation, increasing the take-up of the model. In his words, 'with a Co-operative Party MP/Secretary of State, [...] the Group [and] College saw the beginning of an opportunity and began to push it. It then happened spontaneously with lots of schools around the country being interested in, which the party, then pushed and proselatysed. Co-operative MPs were talking about it, other MPs were talking about it around the country. So, that was not a policy idea that started with the party machinery, but it definitely started with people who were central to the party. (Ed Balls, 2017, Interview Transcript).

Entrepreneur school

Co-operative Party entrepreneurs were decisive in the development and implementation of the co-operative school idea, as shown in Table 2, below. This can be witnessed in three key ways. Firstly, particularly Peter Hunt and the Co-operative College Principal Mervyn Wilson encouraged, participated in, and cajoled others into activities to develop and spread the word about co-operative education. Secondly, they recognised the opportunity of Ed Balls's appointment as the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families, and his own political and philosophical preferences, and anticipated the kinds of arguments that he'd be receptive to and persuaded him and his ministerial colleagues to give the model the green light. Thirdly, they helped to facilitate the growth of networks in implementation which saw the idea expand to an extent that surprised even them, owing to subsequent political developments with the Coalition government's expansion of academisation. These core insights do not map onto the

multiple streams approach exactly and describe a more interactive and contingent process whereby policy entrepreneurs were able to work across the streams, promoting the development of a policy idea in anticipation not 'of problems' (Kingdon, 1984) but of the opportunity afforded by a sympathetic Secretary of State being receptive to their ideas. They also worked within a system of education policy networks to encourage the expansion of take-up of the model during implementation.

A point for reflection relates to the extent to which Co-operative schools can be identified as genuinely mutualist, a question which invites broader questions about the tensions within mutualism itself. Mutualism emphasises voluntarism and participation, values which were given institutional form in this case through the creation of a co-operative blueprint for school governance. While their spread was a result of 'bottom up' take-up by schools, the extent to which this reflected the preferences of parents, pupils, staff, and other key stakeholders is a matter for speculation. What is known is that headteachers were enthusiastic about the model, seeing it, as discussed above, as a means of preserving existing patterns of working and remaining as closely aligned with the Local Authority-led school system which predated the arrival of academies, grant-maintained, and other 'Charter School' inspired neoliberal school reforms.

Conclusion

Empirically, the case studies demonstrate the utility of the Co-operative Party's relationship with the Labour Party. While the New Labour period represented in some cases a best-case scenario - Labour's viability as a potential party of government has been called repeatedly into question of late, it demonstrates that both sides of the alliance were able to benefit

substantively. From the Co-operative Party's perspective, policy gains were made owing to the party's close involvement with Labour politicians, some of whom were co-sponsored. From Labour's perspective, the Co-operative Party has proven to be a source of constructive engagement, legitimation of controversial reforms, and feasible policy ideas.

This article builds upon the meagre range of published academic material about the Co-operative Party and its relationship with Labour. Previous studies had focused on either the party's early history, the period leading up to 1945, the 1970s and '80s, or have been considerably overtaken by contemporary developments (Adams, 1981; Pollard, 1971, Robertson, 2016; Whitecross, 2015; Vorberg-Rush and Whitecross, 2016; Carbery, 1969). This article contributes a focus on the New Labour period and demonstrates the success that the Co-operative Party had in influencing policy in modest but notable fashion. It therefore breaks new ground in applying policy theory to the question of the Co-operative Party's role in the policymaking process. It shows that the Co-operative/Labour relationship has benefited the Co-operative Party and the movement it represents, and at the very least not harmed the Labour Party during a key period. In terms of its contemporary relevance, it provides a blueprint for how the Co-operative Party might influence any hypothetical future Labour government - and during the intervening years, their visibility and credibility has grown (however remote a prospect a Labour government may seem at the time of writing).

This article also highlights the ideological dimension of the Co-operative Party's relationship with the Labour Party, both at large, and regarding public services. While the Co-operative Party has sought to protect the flame of co-operation (latterly rearticulated as mutualism), New Labour sought – and made their primary domestic policy concern – public services reforms which took influence from the New Public Management. This was overcome by focusing on

areas of overlap, with mutualism providing both contemporary inspiration and historic legitimation for the answering of the 'accountability' question which arose from granting schools, hospitals, and trusts of different kinds greater autonomy within the public sector. In doing so, it allowed New Labour to show that public sector reform was about more than just 'privatisation' but was congruous with the traditions of the broader labour movement. More research will be required both to fill in the remaining gaps in the story of the Co-operative Party during New Labour, and to look beyond it, into Labour's new 'wilderness years'. From 2010 onwards, the Co-operative Party have grown in strength, legitimacy, and visibility both within the Labour Party and more generally. While many of the seeds were sown during the period addressed here, subsequent developments have been equally important and are meritorious of greater exploration as part of a future research agenda.

The above findings also allow us to make observations about policy entrepreneurship and Multiple Streams Analysis. Contemporary studies emphasise the considerable role that policy entrepreneurs can play in facilitating and enabling policy change. Cairney cites examples which 'raise the possibility that the coupling of streams by entrepreneurs is more straightforward in smaller and more manageable issues' (2018, p.218). This insight is borne out by this case studies, with entrepreneurs acting across the three streams. These studies for the most part emphasise the size of the policy system in question, reinforcing findings from Multiple Streams studies demonstrate the significance of scale in determining policy entrepreneur influence. When the scale goes down, the scope of policy entrepreneur influence goes up. These case studies demonstrate this. While the co-operative movement is hypothetically large, the policy subsystem around the interface between co-operative businesses and government is small. Furthermore, the issues are of relatively low salience, but of outsized importance to the community members. As such, policy entrepreneurs linked to the Co-operative Party were able

to identify a previously discarded policy idea in response to an opportunity, and persuade an influential and relevant policymaker of its merits.

This is a relevant consideration for both case studies explored here, however, also important is the issue of salience. Regarding the 'Thomas Bill', public attention was low, senior policymakers had already rejected the notion of high-profile legislative action on this topic, and outside of the co-operative movement, the idea had very little traction. This created a context in which the costs of action were very low to policymakers, and afforded policy entrepreneurs more influence across the three streams. The second case study likewise demonstrates that policy entrepreneurs can be decisive in shaping outcomes through their work across three streams. Here we see them playing a role in problem definition, policy development and availability, and shaping political incentives. However, the three streams in this case are difficult to separate, with happenstance and serendipity nonetheless important.

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Table 1: Key policy entrepreneurs in the passage of the "Thomas Bill"

Name of key figure	Position(s)	Policy entrepreneur role
Peter Hunt	General Secretary of the Co-operative Party	Network and team building Refinement of policy idea Recruitment of Gareth Thomas following PMB ballot
Gareth Thomas MP	Labour MP for Harrow Co-operative Party NEC member	Sponsorship of legislation Building of support within broader Labour Party
Ed Balls	Chief Economic Adviser to the Chancellor of the Exchequer	Tacit support and guidance to "Thomas Bill" team
Tommy McAvoy MP	Senior Government Whip Labour and Co-operative MP	Parliamentary tactics and support Building parliamentary support for legislation within Labour Party

| Jim Lee | Chair, Co-operative Party | Building support for bill within wider Co-operative movement |

Table 2: policy entrepreneur roles in the creation of Co-operative Schools

Name	Formal role	Policy entrepreneur role
Peter Hunt	General Secretary, Co-operative Party	Engagement with cooperative policy networks to develop policy idea Editorship of Co-operative Schools pamphlet Broader development and facilitation of cooperative school model Team building
Mervyn Wilson	Principal, Co-operative College	Development of Co-operative School framework Engagement with cooperative networks
Cliff Mills	Co-operative movement aligned lawyer and activist	Development of legal framework for Co-operative Schools

		Engagement with external policy networks
Ed Balls MP	Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families Labour and Co-operative MP	Authorisation of initial pilot scheme Development of critique of Academies model Early endorsement of Co-operative School model Development of cooperative school idea