

Plenary Session 2

Accounting and Globalization



Professor David J. Cooper

University of Alberta

ABSTRACT

Accounting shapes processes of globalization, influencing its particular form both directly and through its cultural impact. I will explore the relationship through two areas of my research: on international and transnational accounting regulation (both standard setting and the activities of multinational accounting firms) and on the spread of performance measurement systems in multinational firms and non-governmental organizations. I will review differing conceptions of globalization (as globaloney, glocalization and as globalism), as well as accounting as a technology and as an institutional body of ideas, visions and practices.

International accounting regulation is typically viewed through the lens of harmonization of accounting and auditing standards. While important, I will focus more on the role of professional firms and the importance of the regulatory agencies themselves. The second area will be to examine of management ideas and practices diffuse internationally. Here I will draw on research about the BSC (used in many multinational firms) and the Logical Framework (used by NGOs in economic development).

My conclusions will suggest there is much globaloney about the integrated nature of accounting firms and that global accounting standards are perhaps only relevant in countries with powerful capital markets. As far as glocalization is concerned, the research on performance measurement systems within organizations highlights the interaction and mutual constitution of the local and gobal. Finally, globalism highlights how accounting discourse promotes images of accountability, transparency, marketization, financialization and universal best practices. Research and practice is needed to construct alternative (and non romantic) accounting language and practices.