**Advert Title**: AHRC/CHASE Collaborative Doctoral Award PhD studentship in collaboration with the University of Essex and the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre and Archive – From an Experiment in Industrial Democracy to Driving the Difference: The John Lewis Partnership Co-ownership model 1964 - 2014

*Qualification type*: PhD

*Location*: [University of Essex, Colchester]

*Funding for*: UK Students / EU Students

*Funding amount*: AHRC stipend: for the academic year 2019-20, the stipend will be £15,559. This includes enhanced stipend to cover travel costs relating to the project. Additional equipment and travel costs will be supported.

*Closes*: Friday 17 May 2019, 12 noon

From an Experiment in Industrial Democracy to Driving the Difference: The John Lewis Partnership Co-ownership model 1964 - 2014

Applications are invited for a CHASE-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award with the University of Essex and the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) Archive and Heritage Centre.

The aim is to understand how democracy was understood within the business and how the John Lewis model influenced wider debates about worker participation and co-ownership.

Research will focus on JLP’s archives but the researcher will also use collections such as the Co-operative archives, the Modern Records Centre and other business archives.

This is an exciting project for researchers with backgrounds in twentieth-century British history, social history, labour or business history from any relevant degree. It offers a unique opportunity for candidates considering careers in the archive, library and museum sectors or fields such as policy, public affairs, corporate communications or management. It also offers a valuable platform for those aiming for an academic career involving public engagement or collaborative research.

**The studentship**

In 1914, John Spedan Lewis began his ‘experiment in industrial democracy’ at the drapery store, Peter Jones. He created the Staff Council in 1919, giving employees, both shop-floor and management, the opportunity to discuss and explore issues which were relevant to the running of the business. The John Lewis Partnership (JLP) has since become the largest co-owned business in the United Kingdom and the ‘John Lewis model’ – an apparently successful conciliation of free-market capitalism and social good – continues to draw the attention of politicians, the media and academics. Yet the ways in which the founding ideology has been expressed, interpreted and understood within the development of a profit-maximising retail organisation remains underresearched.

There has also been little attention given to this process of accommodating commercial success and co-ownership in wider historical and political contexts. Many different models of industrial democracy were advocated in Britain in the post-war period and interest in the potential benefits of employees having a stake in the effective running of their workplaces spanned the political spectrum and remained on policy agendas into the early 1980s. Even though it has since lost this prominence – the reasons for which the researcher will explore – it is an idea that has periodically resurfaced (for example, in Theresa May’s tentative proposals for worker representation on company boards early in her premiership).

Researching the more recent history of the JLP model will allows the researcher to trace changes in how industrial democracy was conceived and implemented not only during its political heyday of the mid-60s to the mid-1970s but through the profound shifts in labour markets, economic policy and industrial strategy that have occurred since then.

The business itself commissioned the only major academic study of these arrangements in practice. When the centenary of the original business – and the jubilee of Spedan Lewis’ ‘experiment’ – were celebrated in 1964, the Chairman, Sir Bernard Miller, sought to ‘obtain an independent assessment of how the Partnership looks to its own Partners and how far it is fulfilling its aims and functions as “an experiment in industrial democracy”’. The resultant study was published in 1968 as *Experiment in Industrial Democracy, A Study of the John Lewis Partnership*.

Yet no comparative, historically-attuned analysis of the co-ownership model, and the relevance of the role of the Councils and other democratic bodies has been undertaken. This will form the major area for research, addressing the fifty-year period between the centenary/jubilee celebrations and the major reorganisation of the democratic structures of the business as part of the ‘Driving the Difference’ programme, undertaken in 2014.

There will be scope for the student to shape the research questions. Among those that may be explored are:

\* How did debates about co-ownership change over the period 1964-2015 and how relevant was the Partnership – as both a model and as an operational business – to those conversations?

\* How significant was the co-ownership model perceived to be to the commercial performance of JLP during this period?

\* To what extent did people see a connection between the democratic arrangements and the transfer of more knowledge and power to Partners?

\* How did increases in the size and complexity of the business affect attitudes to co-ownership, particularly among management?

\* How has the power, influence and knowledge wielded by the Council and other democratic bodies affected key management decisions?

\* How has the ‘John Lewis model’ been put to use outside the Partnership over this period and how do these uses relate to internal perceptions, narratives and beliefs?

While the primary output will be a doctoral thesis, this project aims to provide knowledge usable by the Partnership. To that end, the researcher will be offered the opportunity to contribute to a range of business-oriented activities, including identifying archival documents of value for training and development resources, delivering papers or presentations to groups of Partners involved in democratic bodies and senior managers and contributing to wider co-ownership debates with other businesses.

The successful candidate will have access to the full suite of professional development courses available to postgraduate research students through the University’s Proficio programme, as well as to funding for external courses (such as oral history methods) where needed. The Heritage Centre team will provide the training and support needed for using the company archives and a laptop for the duration of study. Accommodation at the Odney Club – a Partnership property adjacent to the Heritage Centre – for visits to the archive and any costs related to business meetings and events will also be covered by JLP.

The supervisory team will be Alix Green and Matthew Grant from the University of Essex and Judy Faraday, JLP Heritage Services Manager. The CDA student will be joining an active, supportive and genuinely collaborative research team. Green and Faraday have been collaborating successfully for six years; the overarching aim of their work – to which this project will contribute – is to demonstrate the value of archival collections, not just as repositories and providers of marketable ‘heritage’ but as resources that can offer evidence and insight for the present and future conduct of business. We welcome applications from candidates of any academic or professional background able to demonstrate their capability and preparedness for this research.

**The candidate:**

Candidates will usually have a good honours degree (2:1 or above) and a relevant Master’s degree, with at least one of these being in the discipline of History. Candidates with practice-based postgraduate degrees such as Archive Science, or with equivalent professional experience are also welcome to apply.

In addition, candidates should have a good knowledge of the post-war period in Britain and experience of conducting archival research.

As a collaborative project with the John Lewis Partnership, the researcher will be working closely with the Heritage Centre and engage with Partners in other parts of the business. Prospective students should therefore be interested in developing the ‘applied’ aspects of their research and learning about the Partnership as an active business.

**How to apply**

Applications for this studentship must be made via the University of Essex application form <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/pgapply/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fpgapply%2f>

**Terms and conditions**

The studentship is subject to UKRI eligibility criteria, and will cover home or EU fees and stipend at UKRI rates for a maximum of four years full-time, or eight years part-time study, subject to institutional regulations.

**Informal Enquiries**

Informal enquiries about this collaborative project can be sent to Dr Alix Green alix.green@essex.ac.uk