

# Editorial

The Summer issue of the *Journal* begins with an article by Simon Berge and Koudima Bokoumbo which explores the potential for worker co-operatives to provide social care in Canada. Care of the elderly in Canada follows a pattern that many readers will be familiar with: an ageing population with significant care needs, shareholder-owned care providers who prioritise profit, and personal support workers (PSWs) who are leaving the sector due to a combination of low pay, long working hours, and poor working conditions. Berge and Bokoumbo present an exploratory study of a newly-formed home care workers' co-operative set up by PSWs in Canada who were disenchanted with the current social care model. Although the study is small scale and exploratory, the initial findings suggest that the PSW co-operators are experiencing greater empowerment and engagement in their work than those who are in shareholder-owned providers. This paper is a continuation of the discussion about co-operatives and social care (Bird et al., 2022), inspired by Birchall's (2022) observations about the future of the co-operative movement.

The short articles begin with a report by Jonathan Dolley on the Hansalim Life Movement and New Cooperativism in South Korea, based on his ongoing work with Hansalim as part of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship. Taking the Winter 2022 Special Issue on New Cooperativism (Ridley-Duff & O'Shaughnessy, 2022) as the starting point, Dolley argues that the Hansalim Life Movement shares many values and characteristics of New Cooperativism. Hansalim began as a co-operative of producers and consumers, concerned with environmentally friendly, safe food. Members developed the Hansalim Life Movement, with a vision to promote mutual solidarity between humans and nature. While the original focus was on food, the movement has expanded into a widespread federation of producer and consumer members guided by four principles: reviving food, reviving agriculture, reviving life, and reviving community. Dolley demonstrates the connections between the Hansalim Life Movement and New Cooperativism by comparing them in terms of purpose, ethic, political-economic orientation, and governance. He concludes with suggestions for further research.

Andrew Bibby provides an update on Gritstone Publishing Cooperative, which is the first publishing company in Britain to operate as author-run co-operative. Having previously reported on Gritstone's early years (Bibby, 2018), this latest article begins by considering the benefits of the co-operative model for self-employed workers, particularly in response to precarious work (Conaty et al., 2016). Gritstone was founded in 2016 with the aim of enabling the author-owners to take more control over the publishing process. The co-operative specialises in fiction and non-fiction about the landscape and countryside, focusing primarily on the north of England. Gritstone has grown steadily and launched the Gritstone Social History imprint in 2022. Bibby offers some reflections on the strength of the co-operative publishing model, particularly the governance structures and support offered to authors. Bibby's *These Houses are Ours: Co-operative and Community-led Housing Alternatives, 1870-1919*, the first book from Gritstone Social History, is reviewed in this issue.

The final short article is by Steve Jacobs who writes about the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), which was founded in 1973 in Machynlleth, mid-Wales, as an experiment in sustainable living. It also began to offer educational courses on renewal energy and organic farming. This article provides an overview of a larger project about CAT, which was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and has recently been published (Jacobs, 2023). Although CAT never formally registered as a co-operative, it was run on co-operative principles, with joint decision-making by the workers at weekly meetings. Jacobs, who was a staff member and part of CAT's site community during the 1980s, writes about the joys and difficulties in sustaining the founding principles of egalitarianism and collective decision-making. He shows how the founding ethos became unsustainable as CAT grew in size and complexity, and a financial crisis saw the introduction of a CEO and hierarchical management structure. While CAT was never a formal co-operative, the

study provides insights into collective decision-making, member commitment and the question of growth.

The joys and difficulties of worker co-operatives are also a theme of the Think Piece by Simon Ball, a founder member of Blake House. Ball offers an honest and passionate account of the experience of setting up a worker co-operative in the film industry. In it, we learn about the excitement and liberation the founders experienced when they discovered the co-operative model, their satisfaction at producing high quality work, and the all-consuming nature of both the film industry and worker co-operatives which lead to self-exploitation and exhaustion. Ball concludes with some reflections on the future and a heartfelt statement on the value of co-operatives.

The issue concludes with two book reviews. Andrew Bibby's *These Houses are Ours: Co-operative and Community-led Housing Alternatives, 1870-1919* is reviewed by Carl Taylor who writes that it is a thoroughly researched and well-written history of co-operative and community-led housing solutions in the UK. *Humanity @ Work & Life: Global Diffusion of the Mondragon Cooperative Ecosystem Experience* is edited by Christina Clamp and Michael Peck. It is reviewed by Alex Bird who writes that the book offers a thorough and accessible account of the ways that worker-ownership can change the world for the better.

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**Editor**

## References

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