



Journal of Co-operative Studies

2026 Special issue: Imagining co-operatives? Co-operatives and co-operative economy in art and culture – Call for papers

For this special issue, **Dr Anita Mangan**, editor of the *Journal*, will be joined by **guest editors Dr Aidan Byrne**, Senior Lecturer in English and Cultural Studies at the University of Wolverhampton, and **Professor Martin Parker**, Professor of Organization Studies at the University of Bristol Business School.

For many decades, the *Journal of Co-operative Studies* has delineated the ideals and practices of co-operation in theory and in practice. Now we turn to the imagination. This special issue calls for exploration of the cultural imaginaries of co-operation, whether in popular culture (film, video games, soap opera, and drama), in 'literature' and popular fiction, and in creative non-fiction (manifestos, calls to action, art, and even music) and within cultural co-operatives themselves. The editors welcome submissions ranging from full academic articles/research papers (7,000 words), as well as short articles (4,000 words), and short think pieces (approx. 1,000 words) from practitioners — please see the *Journal's* guidelines for submission for information on *Journal* style and formatting.

Accepted papers will be published in a special issue of the *Journal* in 2026.

Key dates:

30 April 2025	Deadline for extended abstracts (1,000-1,200 words) for academic articles and short papers; outline suggestions for think pieces (500-800 words, or in full).
	Email to: a.byrne2@wlv.ac.uk , martin.parker@bristol.ac.uk , and editor@ukscs.coop with 'Submission for special issue' in the subject line, and detail in your email the type of

	submission being made (research article, short paper/practitioner paper, think piece).
30 June 2025	Initial decisions and invitations for submission of full papers.
30 November 2025	Submission of full papers.

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Some examples of the work we are thinking about are Upton Sinclair’s *Co-op: a Novel of Living Together* from 1936, Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974), Ken MacLeod’s speculative fiction, including the Fall Revolution series (1995-1999), co-operative board games for children and adults, Polyp’s ‘Cooperative Revolution’ graphic novel (2012).

We have many questions which have motivated the launch of this special issue. How do these works illuminate co-operative principles and values, and how do they problematise co-operation? Does the presentation of co-operatives in art reflect, promote, idealise, or marginalise them? Does the imagined co-operative reflect our aspirations for the co-operative model? Do the imagined communities and conditions produced by co-operative artistic movements differ from those of the autonomous artist? What sort of political effects might such fictions produce, and are they useful as a form of political strategy? Equally, what sort of artistic effects might ensue from such work?

We are also interested in understanding what co-operatives recur in imaginative work: worker co-ops, consumer co-ops, housing co-ops, and more? How do the ideological social and historical contexts of these representations inform their depiction? What kind of fictional tensions, plots and resolutions arise from the presence of co-operatives in these imagined communities? How has imaginative labour informed or inspired the co-operative movement?

We welcome abstracts or completed papers from practitioners and academics that explore these and other related questions for a special issue to be published in 2026.

Potential topics for contributions to a special issue of the *Journal of Co-operative Studies* might include (but are not limited to):

- Co-operatives and co-operation in literature and popular culture
- Imagining co-operation
- Co-operation, character development, and plot
- Alternative economic realities
- Feminist, anarchist, and environmentalist co-operative fictions
- Utopia and dystopia
- Speculative fiction
- Didactic / educational work
- Imagined intentional communities
- Conditions of creating co-operative art

References

- Le Guin, U. K. (1974). *The dispossessed*. Harper & Row.
- MacLeod, K. (1995). *The star fraction*. Legend Books.
- MacLeod, K. (1996). *The stone canal*. Legend Books.
- MacLeod, K. (1998). *The Cassini division*. Orbit.
- MacLeod, K. (1999). *The sky road*. Orbit.
- Polyp. (2012). *The co-operative revolution: A graphic novel*. New Internationalist Publications Ltd.
- Sinclair, U. (1936). *Co-op: A novel of living together*. Farrar & Reinhart.