



Editorial

As readers of the *Journal of Co-operatives Studies* know, much has been written about co-operatives by co-operators and for co-operators. Co-operative principles and values, governance, regulation, models, and case studies all explore the rich ecosystem of co-operative organisations. Moreover, there are sustained and thoughtful debates exploring the intersections between co-operatives and contemporary topics such as social justice, decent work, housing, sustainable development goals (SDGs), the social solidarity economy, resilience, and climate justice. Where there is a problem to be addressed, or an alternative way of organising to be considered, the international community of co-operative practitioners and academics can usually make an impassioned, strong case for the co-operative advantage.

Outside the co-operative ecosystem, however, the co-operative model can suffer from invisibility (Mangan, 2021). People might be familiar with 'The Co-op' as a brand on the UK high street (or main street), but they might not know anything about co-operative principles and values. Similarly, building society members might not necessarily understand the idea of mutuality. If someone wanted to learn more about co-operatives and asked for a recommendation, where should they start? As Ian Adderley discovered when he was asked that question, there is so much in-depth research to choose from that a simple recommendation can quickly become a substantial reading list, when what is actually needed is a primer that could introduce people to co-operatives, spark their interest, and encourage them to engage further with the world of co-operatives.

This conundrum led Adderley to write *Co-operatives: Linking practice and theory* (Adderley, in press) as a useful primer on all things co-operative. It is for this reason that the UK Society for Co-operative Studies (UKSCS) decided to support *Co-operatives: Linking practice and theory* as one of the joint publishers with the Co-operative Press. UKSCS was founded in 1967 and throughout its history has focused on sharing critical practice and engaged research on co-operatives and co-operation. *Co-operatives: Linking practice and theory* contributes to the Society's charitable aims by offering an accessible introduction to co-operatives in sections that explore principles and context, technical aspects, and co-operative philosophy. The book acts both as a portrait of co-operatives in all their variety and a synthesis of research knowledge and practical expertise. It will be a valuable resource for everyone who wants to learn more about the co-operative advantage.

The winter issue presents a series of seven extracts from *Co-operatives: Linking practice and theory*. The issue begins with "The UK co-operative movement today" which outlines

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the size and sector type of co-operatives in the UK. It also considers the difficulties in defining co-operatives. This extract gives the reader a sense of the breadth and depth of the contemporary co-operative movement in the UK. The second extract, "Co-operatives in context" explains some of the descriptors of co-operatives, their characteristics, and their interaction with legal structures. There is a careful exploration of the similarities and differences between co-operatives and mutuals, as well as other organisational forms such as employee-owned businesses, charities, social enterprises, BCorps, and investor-owned businesses. It provides clarity on the subtle differences between them all.

Having covered broadly contextual material in the opening two extracts, the next three are taken from the technical section of the book. "Co-operative governance" provides an overview of the classifications of different types of co-operatives, before then considering governance in broader terms. The key to understanding of any type of co-operative governance arrangement is to recognise the nature of the relationship between the member and the business of the co-operative. "Legislative history" provides a brief overview of the development of co-operative law from the 1850s to 1930. Legal recognition is the foundation for co-operative growth, so this extract gives a flavour of the heated debates of the time. The fifth extract, "Co-operative economics", explores various theorisations of co-operatives in the field of economics. While making the point that analyses of co-operatives are largely sidelined in mainstream economics, this extract considers the wealth of analysis from within the co-operative ecosystem of academics and practitioners. It considers co-operative advantage, disadvantage, the competitive yardstick, and the question of market stability.

The final two extracts consider co-operative thinking. Extract six explores co-operative ideology by discussing the dual nature of co-operatives, which includes both an economic and a social mandate. An overview of the historical debate on co-operative ideology considers the different understandings of the dual nature. This is followed by a discussion of the cultural element before concluding with a discussion of who benefits from co-operatives. The final extract considers co-operatives and social responsibility. It explores the relationship between co-operatives and the ideas of community, social responsibility, sustainable development, and concern for community.

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References

- Adderley, I. (in press). *Co-operatives: Linking practice and theory*. Co-operative Press Limited/UK Society for Co-operative Studies.
- Mangan, A. (2021). Hidden in plain sight: How UK national newspapers report on co-operatives. *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, 54(4), 39-50.