



Editorial

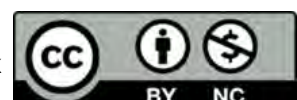
The theme of the UN International Year of Co-operatives (IYC2025) is “co-operatives build a better world” and that theme runs through the papers in this open issue of the *Journal of Co-operative Studies*. The wide-ranging, international scope of the papers demonstrates the breadth of co-operative reach into a variety of sectors, spread around the world.

The autumn issue begins with a literature review by Tian Xu, Mary O’Shaughnessy, and Lucas Olmedo that explores the role of agricultural co-operatives in promoting sustainable development in rural areas. The authors argue that existing literature on agricultural co-operatives and rural development tends to focus on a specific issue, be it economic, environmental, or social. To develop a holistic view of the field, the authors review thirty years of research to determine the key trends. Their findings show a stark difference between the Global North and Global South. Scholars from the Global North tend to study the transformation of agricultural co-operatives and their evolution into models for promoting social development. In contrast, poverty alleviation and green production are the primary concerns of scholars from the Global South. They suggest future research areas including the role of public policy, the sustainability trade-offs, and the tensions between economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

The short papers bring global perspectives to a wide range of co-operative topics, including governance, agriculture, social care, and housing. Linda Bennison reports on her recently completed doctoral thesis which explored how Australia’s regulatory environment can foster and develop co-operatives. Her thesis had three separate components: an examination of stakeholder submissions to the Australian Senate 2016 inquiry into co-operatives, mutuals, and member-owned firms, the development of a path dependence framework to understand the lifecycle of Australian co-operatives, and a comparison of co-operative and corporate responses to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Planetary Boundary Framework. One of her recommendations is the creation of a single federal regulator to boost co-operative visibility.

Thomas Gray reports on US dairy farmers’ struggles and survival dilemmas. The report summarises a larger study based on agricultural co-operatives in the northwest US, drawing on qualitative comments collected from a survey, as well as Gray’s lived experience of growing up on a farm. The paper begins with an analysis of the changed socio-economic landscape for dairy farmers, where the focus on growth has created a technocentric approach to farming, with long and complex supply chains delivering to a global market. The net result has been consolidation across the sector and the loss of medium-sized family farms. Gray charts the stresses experienced by these farmers as their career, family heritage, and financial security

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disappear, giving voice to their frustrations. He concludes with a series of recommendations for the co-operative's member-relations.

To mark IYC2025, the Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork, in association with the UK Society for Co-operative Studies and the Society for Co-operative Studies in Ireland, hosted a webinar on home care co-operatives. Carol Power and Caroline Crowley report on the webinar, which featured the experiences of two home care co-operatives as well as a panel discussion. Equal Care Co-op and The Great Care Co-op were both founded with the aim of delivering home care that respects and empowers all stakeholders by focusing on relationship-centred care. The panel discussion included an assessment of the commodification of home care, the invisibility of the co-operative model in public policy debates on social care, as well as the benefits and challenges of the model.

Moving from social care, to housing, Tej Gonza and David Ellerman offer a rethink of member contributions to housing co-operatives. In their short paper they argue that the present system creates intergenerational unfairness between the first tenants and those who join the housing co-operative later. This is because the initial tenants need to pay off the cost of the property, with rent reduced when the loan repayments are paid off. They coin the phrase “go out naked” to characterise the experience of the initial tenants who often leave the property and gift its value to subsequent tenants. To counter this, they suggest borrowing the idea of Internal Capital Accounts from worker co-operatives, explaining how this can ensure that tenants pay “true cost” rent.

The next short paper is an extended discussion of strategic renewal of Scandinavian co-operatives written by Samuli Skurnik and prompted by his review of Sara Kristoffersson's (2024) *Det Förlorade Paradiset: Berättelsen om Konsums Uppgång och Fall*. Kristoffersson's account of the decline of the Swedish KF-Konsum leads Skurnik to consider the challenges of strategic renewal in consumer co-operatives. He contrasts the risks of an ideals-based approach versus a consumer-member focus.

Our final short paper is a fine tribute to Rita Rhodes (1934-2025), written by Roger Spear. Rita had a tremendous impact on the world of co-operatives in general and on UKSCS and the *Journal of Co-operative Studies* in particular. She served as UKSCS chair and vice chair, as well as reviews editor for the *Journal*, in addition to contributing numerous articles, reviews, and commentaries. We were deeply saddened to learn of her death. Spear's article pays tribute to her co-operative life, deep learning, and advocacy for co-operatives, as well as reflecting on the impact she had on people. He includes an annotated bibliography of her key works, which serves as a great introduction to her writings.

The issue concludes with two book reviews. The first book review is *Imagine, Studying the Relationship between Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and Imaginary in the Era of Capitalocene*, a collection of essays edited by Alexandrine Lapoutte, Timothée Duverger, and Eric Dacheux. It is reviewed by Cian McMahon and Felipe de Medeiros Oliveira. They praise the scope of the book, which offers in-depth consideration of the intersection between shared representations and the “real utopias” of SSE. They praise the way the text presents organisational imaginaries as collective and political, but caution that as a theoretical, speculative volume, it is more suited to an academic audience. The second review is *Everything For Everyone: The Radical Tradition that is Shaping the Next* by Nathan Schneider. It is reviewed by Nick Matthews who writes admiringly of Schneider's storytelling and passion for co-operatives. The text reviews co-operative development in the United States over the past hundred years, charting successes, failures, and recent developments. Schneider's conclusions are cautionary and Matthews recognises his description of the generation gap between new and old co-operators, the lost knowledge, and atomisation. In particular, Matthews commends Schneider's reminder that all aspects of the co-operative commonwealth will need to involve, technology, structures, and cultures alike.

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Editor