

Call for papers:

Cooperatives on the edge of societal challenges

Guest editors

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The evolving economic, financial and climate crises are drastically altering the socio-economic context in which we live and they have even accelerated in the post-pandemic context. Despite qualitative and quantitative differences of the effects of such transformations, societal challenges affect individuals, communities, enterprises, regions and nations in the Global North and South with no exceptions. As a response, a wide variety of heterodox economic and civic organisations have emerged in local communities, thus stimulating innovative coping strategies aiming to address complex societal problems (Dorado and Ventresca, 2013; van Wijk et al., 2019; Zapata Campos et al., 2023). These organisations have developed and implemented novel solutions to cope with unemployment, poverty, health crises, ongoing and emerging conflicts, rising living costs, gender inequalities, the depletion of natural resources and the destruction of natural environments. They embody new ways of doing, new forms of thinking in relation to knowledge, meanings, and vision and images; and bring to the fore new forms of organising and governance, which altogether create change in socio-material relations (Avelino, Monticelli, and Wittmayer, 2019). For this reason, these solutions create and re-negotiate the existing socio-economic logics among stakeholders (Helms, Oliver and Webb, 2012).

Enterprises are vital actors of past and future socio-economic scenarios. Among them, cooperatives stand as fair, democratic, and sustainable organisations, which achieve acceptable economic and financial performance while pursuing social goals (Novković, Miner and McMahon, 2023). Cooperatives have proved flexible and resilient organisational models throughout crises thanks to the involvement of multiple and diverse stakeholders, and the proactive adaptation to new conditions. Differently from traditional, profit-oriented enterprises, cooperatives directly and explicitly contribute to the social, economic and cultural betterment of people and communities. The humanistic principles that guide cooperatives and the social values embedded in their daily operations make them a privileged object of scholar analysis (Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017). The extent to which and how cooperatives address contemporary societal challenges are, however, under-thematised topics. As societal challenges loom, the effective implementation of proactive measures and appropriate organisational responses are at stake. The evolution of the cooperative organisational model in the wake of epochal economic, financial, and environmental challenges is related to this changing socio-economic context.

We understand cooperatives as a crucial organisational form in responding to grand societal challenges due to their intrinsic characteristics. Cooperatives are alternative organisations (Cheney et al., 2014) that operate in and outside the hegemonic economic models (Raffaelli, 2017), whose entrepreneurial action has a collective character and is mainly performed at the local level (Birchall, 2011). Cooperatives profoundly differ from traditional enterprises in that they adhere to non-market rationales: cooperatives can use non-market resources to support alternative patterns of local development, produce social values and involve stakeholders, for example by resorting to volunteer labour and utilization of common resources (Tortia, 2018). Cooperatives prioritise reciprocity, mutualism, egalitarianism and autonomy, which foster inclusive models of participation (Kokkinidis, 2015), whereby cooperative governance models internalise participation and decision-making activities. As in the case of multi-stakeholdership, inclusive governance reduces external or social costs (Sacchetti, 2015; Sacchetti and Borzaga, 2021).

Among the various challenges faced by cooperatives are the preservation of jobs of distressed enterprises and closing businesses through worker takeovers (Vieta, 2019); the development of new services, products and processes that support different forms of social innovation (Tortia, Degavre and Poledrini, 2021); the achievement of social

and environmental sustainability required by climate change and the SDGs (Filippi, Bidet and Richez-Battesti, 2023); and the establishment of multiple cooperative entrepreneurial ecosystems (Spicer and Zhong, 2022).

In relation to these emerging challenges, this Special Issue interprets cooperatives as collective actions: while cooperatives are stand-alone enterprises, they also establish local and trans-local support networks that enable transformative actions of solidarity and integrate diverse economic practices into broader ethic-political projects of resistance and social transformation (Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017; Daskalaki and Raffaelli, forthcoming).

The Special Issue is interested in discussing different topics and problems related to the broad context of social and environmental sustainability. This particularly touches upon the development of social and collective entrepreneurship in social wealth creation that catalyses social transformation by meeting social needs (Mair and Marti, 2006; Daskalaki, Hjorth and Mair, 2015). These topics include:

- The potential of cooperatives to **support the production of social innovations**, their dimensions, outcomes and benefits for individuals and activists, organisations, social movements, local communities and public administration (Montgomery, 2016; Esper et al., 2017), as well as their struggles (Nowak and Raffaelli, 2022).
- The capacity of cooperatives to adapt and **be resilient to new socio-economic conditions and challenges**, exploring adaptive governance and self-organisation as key tools for achieving social and environmental sustainability (Tortia and Troisi, 2021; Colombo, Bailey and Gomes, 2023). In relation to this, we seek to study the contribution of cooperatives in the circular economy and towards building a **sustainable future society**, the production of social value in favour of future generations and the most marginalised social groups (Sacchetti and Borzaga, 2021).
- The transformative social role of cooperatives, especially in the field of conversion of investor-owned enterprises into worker cooperatives or worker-owned enterprises, with the aim of **preserving jobs of distressed enterprises and going concerns**.

This JEOD Special Issue is open to all scholars and invites contributions at the cutting edge of scientific research with original and innovative articles discussing new cooperative models and their potential and impact in the wake of socio-economic, technological and environmental challenges.

The deadline for submission of extended abstract of 1,500 words (excluding references) is the 31st of August 2023. They should be submitted to the JEOD Editorial Office (jeod@euricse.eu). Please indicate in the headline that the submission is for the Special Issue “Cooperatives on the edge of societal challenges”.

There will be an online informative meeting about the Special Issue and publication details after the evaluation of abstracts. Potential contributors are highly encouraged to participate in the meeting, although participation is neither a guarantee nor a confirmation of acceptance of full-length papers for publication in the Special Issue. Following the meeting, the deadline for submission of full-length papers, which will undergo an ordinary double-blind peer review process, is the 31st of January 2024 through Editorial Manager (www.editorialmanager.com/jeod). We expect the Special Issue to be published in late 2024. All manuscripts should comply with submission guidelines and ethical standards of JEOD. Questions and informal enquiries on the Special Issue or submission procedures should be directed to any of the three guest editors.

Keywords

Sustainability, Circular Economy, Social and Collective Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation, Worker Takeovers

Important dates

Deadline for submission of extended abstract	31 August 2023
Communication of evaluation of abstract	30 September 2023
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