



## Special Issue Call for Papers

### *Reimagining the governance of cooperatives: The dynamics, diffusion, and consequences of governance innovations*

#### *Guest Editors (listed alphabetically)*

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While society increasingly grapples with pressing social and environmental challenges, trust in modern-day capitalism is eroding (Holmes et al. 2022). We have seen a surge in interest among management and business and society researchers in cooperatives as a promising and influential alternative form of organizing (Mair and Rathert 2021). Among their many benefits, cooperatives can help reduce inequality (Young-Hyman et al. 2023), safeguard workers' interests (Battilana et al. 2022), confer greater control to members over their personal data (Mannan and Pek 2021), contribute to organizational resilience (Billiet et al. 2021), and foster more responsible consumption (Papaoikonomou et al. 2012).

Cooperatives are expected to operate according to a set of cooperative principles promoted by the International Cooperative Alliance (n.d.), which include autonomy and independence, cooperation among cooperatives, and democratic member control. Adherence to these principles underpins many of the benefits of cooperatives. Democratic member control is perhaps the central feature distinguishing cooperatives from conventional enterprises (Van Dijk et al. 2019). In addition to owning their cooperatives, members have the right and responsibility to effectively control them and shape their destiny, usually based on the principle of one member, one vote (Cornforth 2004).

However, cooperatives often find it challenging to implement and sustain democratic member control in practice. For example, cooperatives may be exposed to governance failures if they do not adapt their governance practices, as illustrated in the bankruptcy of Fagor Electrodomésticos (Basterretxea et al. 2020). Key sites of democratic participation in cooperatives like general assemblies and boards of directors often succumb to problems like low and unequal levels of member participation (Pek, 2023). Cooperatives have historically struggled with coordinating

member participation in governance when they seek to operate beyond a local scale (Mannan, 2018) or when their membership base is heterogeneous, such as in multi-stakeholder cooperatives (Billiet et al. 2023). Finally, inadequate education and training about the importance of democratic member control has also compromised the ability of cooperatives to sustain participation (Meira and Ramos 2023).

As such, the search for innovative approaches to cooperative governance matters more than ever. To be sure, cooperatives have long been at the forefront of developing and experimenting with novel practices to improve and sustain their democratic governance. As “laboratories for social innovation” (Novkovic 2008, p. 2168), cooperatives have long implemented innovative governance practices like providing women with voting and eligibility rights as early as in 1884 at the Rochdale cooperative (Zamagni and Zamagni 2010), enabling proportional voting, and promoting the formation of member councils (Bijman et al. 2014).

However, there is much room to expand our understanding of these and other innovations. To take one example, the growth of the platform economy and corresponding rise of platform cooperatives (Scholz 2023) and data cooperatives (Micheli et al. 2023) opens opportunities for new approaches towards the governance of cooperatives, including by means of technologies such as blockchain. However, these new types of cooperatives also generate unprecedented challenges, such as the potentially immense geographical spread of members, coming to terms with the use of complex emerging technologies, and balancing the interests of members and non-member investors (Mannan and Pek 2023). Expanding our understanding of governance innovations in cooperatives will not only help cooperatives address the abovementioned challenges and achieve their social and environmental objectives, but can also serve as a powerful source of inspiration for burgeoning efforts to democratize conventional enterprises (Battilana et al. 2022; Diefenbach 2020).

Accordingly, in this special issue, we seek to synthesize existing knowledge and generate new insights about innovative approaches to the governance of cooperatives centred on four key themes, that we see particularly promising:

- a) The application of new theories of democracy and governance to the governance of cooperatives;
- b) The inputs and processes underpinning governance innovations in cooperatives, including the use of new and emerging technologies for such innovations;
- c) The multi-layered, intended, and unintended outcomes of governance innovations in cooperatives; and
- d) The diffusion of governance innovations among cooperatives and other organizations.

We offer the following research questions as illustrations of what these four themes look like in practice. Prospective authors are welcome to consider other salient research questions spanning these themes as long as they fit within the research theme broadly and contribute to advancing our understanding of the field of business and society. We are particularly excited to receive submissions that adopt an interdisciplinary approach and reflect the diversity of cooperative enterprises around the world. Conceptual and empirical papers using a variety of qualitative,

quantitative, and mixed methods are all welcome as long as they meet the journal's standards for quality and rigour.

### ***New theories of democracy and governance***

- What inspiration can different political theories like agonism (Mouffe 2013), deliberative democracy (Thompson 2008), and republicanism (Pettit 2012) offer to spur innovation in cooperative governance in cooperatives?
- When, and under what conditions, can cooperatives adopt emergent organizational governance systems like Holacracy (Robertson 2015) or sociocracy (Rau and Koch-Gonzalez 2018)?
- How do political ideologies and cultures ranging from eco-socialism to solarpunk to cypherpunk to anarcho-libertarianism (McDonnell 2021; Swann 2023), shape the governance of new cooperatives?
- When, and under what conditions, can cooperatives adopt elements of Indigenous governance systems and principles (Christensen 2020)?

### ***Inputs and processes underpinning governance innovations in cooperatives***

- When and under what conditions can cooperatives leverage technologies like blockchain (Mannan 2018) and artificial intelligence (Ramos et al. 2023) to improve the democratic character of their governance?
- How can we re-imagine representation in cooperative governance through the use of novel selection methods like sortition (Pek 2021) and deliberative mini-publics (Pek 2023)?
- How do cooperatives integrate democratic innovations like liquid democracy (Blum and Zuber 2016) and quadratic voting (Posner and Weyl 2015) into their governance?
- What values (Hendriks 2002) and ecosystems that can facilitate the successful implementation of democratic governance innovations in cooperatives?
- How do cooperatives resist compromising their identity as member-governed entities when they avail themselves of new forms of external financing, such as crowdfunding (Lam and Law 2016)?
- How can cooperatives collaborate effectively with national, regional, and municipal government institutions while retaining their autonomy as member-governed entities (Manley 2021)?
- How do cooperatives with an international membership use democratic and technological innovations (Olson et al. 2023) to retain their identities as member-governed entities, resist degeneration, and promote regeneration?

### ***Outcomes of governance innovations in cooperatives***

- What are the various outcomes of different governance innovations across different types of cooperatives in different regions and different industries?
  - How do they influence democracy-related outcomes like member participation (Birchall 1999), deliberation (Dufays et al. 2020), and degeneration and regeneration (Bretos et al. 2020)?
  - How do they affect organizational outcomes like resilience (Billiet et al. 2021), innovation capabilities (Basterretxea and Martínez 2012), and competitiveness (Amat and Perramon 2011)?

- How do they affect group-level outcomes like the demographics and decision-making styles of boards (Bailey and Peck 2013)?
- How do they shape outcomes like inequality (Huertas-Noble 2016), climate change (García Lozano et al. 2019), and community resilience (Billiet et al. 2021)?
- How do they shape a more just and equitable future of work (Cheney et al. 2023) and enhance member control of their cooperative's data (Pentland et al. 2021)?
- What are the potential unintended (harmful) consequences (Fernández-Martínez et al. 2020) of governance innovations in cooperatives at the individual, group, organizational, and societal levels?
  - At the individual level, might they, for example, result in new forms of alienation (Rothschild and Whitt 1986) or somatic responses such as burnout (Resch and Steyaert 2020)?
  - At the group and organizational level, might they, for example, engender new power imbalances among groups of members or new forms of gender inequality (Ajates Gonzalez 2017; Resch and Steyaert 2020)?
  - At the societal level, might they, for example, contribute to the weakening of alternative organizations and thereby reinforcing the dark sides of capitalism (Ji 2020)?

### ***Diffusion of governance innovations among cooperatives and other organizations***

- How, why, and to what effect do governance innovations diffuse among cooperatives and other organizations like public sector organizations, non-profits, and decentralized autonomous organizations (Boyer 2015; Faqir-Rhazoui et al. 2021; Teixeira et al. 2017)?
  - Which theories, such as institutional theory and network theory (Naumovska et al. 2021), best explain the diffusion patterns of governance innovations among cooperatives and other organizations?
  - How and why do cooperatives translate governance innovations from other organizations, and vice versa?
  - How does the institutional cooperative movement (i.e., apex organizations of cooperatives) influence the diffusion of governance innovations among cooperatives?
  - What are the political and cultural implications of governance innovations from cooperatives in the Global North being adopted by cooperatives in the Global South, and vice versa?

### **Submission Process**

Submissions must fit with the aim and scope of *Business & Society*. To understand the fit with the journal's scope, vision and expectations related to rigor and contribution, we strongly encourage authors to refer to editorial insights published in *Business & Society*. A collection of these is available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/topic/collections-bas/bas-1-editors-insights/bas>.

All manuscripts must be uploaded via the journal's online submission system (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/bas>) between October 1 and December 31, 2024. Make sure to specify in the cover letter that the manuscript is for the special issue on "Innovations in

Governance of Cooperatives.” All submissions will be double-blind peer-reviewed by multiple reviewers. Interested scholars are welcome to contact any of the guest editors.

### **Preparing Your Submission**

Manuscripts should be between 7000-12,000 words, including tables, figures, and references. Research notes should be no more than 5,000 words. Please follow the manuscript submission guidelines for authors of *Business & Society* at <https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/bas>

We can only consider submissions in English. If your first language is not English, financial support may be made available by *Business & Society* for translation on a case-by-case basis. Please write to the SI editors with your request.

The guest editors will organize two paper development workshops. A first pre-submission workshop, where authors present their ideas and receive constructive feedback, will be held virtually on September 12, 2024. To be eligible for the workshop, interested scholars should send a proposal of up to 3,000 words including references to Frédéric Dufays ([frederic.dufays@uliege.be](mailto:frederic.dufays@uliege.be)) by July 31, 2024. A second post-submission workshop, where authors whose manuscripts are granted a “revise and resubmit” decision can receive feedback and instructions for the process going forward, will take place in summer 2025. Further details, including potential modes of participation, will be announced in due course. Attending the workshops is neither a guarantee nor a prerequisite for publication in the special issue.

### **Special Issue timeline**

September 12, 2024: Virtual pre-submission workshop (participation optional)

December 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025: Submission window open for two-month window. Deadline for submissions is January 31, 2025.

Summer 2025 Virtual post-submission workshop (tentative, participation optional)

### **Contact Details**

Interested authors can send their questions via e-mail to the special issue editors: Frédéric Dufays ([frederic.dufays@uliege.be](mailto:frederic.dufays@uliege.be)); Johanna Mair ([Mair@hertie-school.org](mailto:Mair@hertie-school.org)); Morshed Mannan ([Morshed.Mannan@eui.eu](mailto:Morshed.Mannan@eui.eu)); Simon Pek ([spek@uvic.ca](mailto:spek@uvic.ca)).

### **About the Guest Editors**

**Frédéric Dufays** is an Assistant Professor at HEC Liège, University of Liège, and at KU Leuven (Belgium). There, he co-holds the Cera-Boerenbond Chair in Cooperative Entrepreneurship. He is a board member of the EMES global research network on social enterprises. His work is in the field of social enterprises, with a specific focus on democratic organizations. He has published in management, entrepreneurship, and sociology journals such as *Work, Employment & Society*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business and Society*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Organization & Environment*, and *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*. His current

research deals with the democratic governance in cooperatives: how it is implemented, stimulated, what its outcomes are at the individual, organizational, and societal levels.

**Johanna Mair** is a Professor of Organization, Strategy and Leadership at the Hertie School in Berlin. Her current research focuses on alternative forms of economic organizing and political aspects of organized efforts to tackle societal challenges and change social systems. She is the academic editor of *Stanford Social Innovation Review* and co-directs the Global Innovation for Impact Lab at the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. She has co-directed the Social Innovation + Change Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School, has served on the faculty at IESE Business School, and has held a visiting position at the Harvard Business School and INSEAD. Her book *Innovation and Scaling – How effective Social Entrepreneurs create Impact* (Stanford University Press, 2017) co-authored with Christian Seelos has won the 2017 Terry McAdam Award at ARNOVA and the 2018 ONE Outstanding Book Award at the Academy of Management Meeting. Her research has been published in the *Academy of Management Annals*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organization Studies*, *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, *Nature Human Behavior*, and *Stanford Social Innovation*. In addition, her work has been featured in the *Financial Times* and *Forbes Magazine*.

**Morshed Mannan** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in blockchain governance at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute. He has published in several journals across law, humanities, and social sciences, including *Policy & Society*, *Ondernemingsrecht*, *Georgetown Law Technology Review*, *Technology and Society*, *Topoi*, and *Erasmus Law Review*. His current research focuses on the governance of blockchain technologies, the use of blockchain technologies for organizational governance purposes, and the impact of technological change on cooperative law and governance. In addition to several conceptual and empirical papers in progress on these topics, he has a forthcoming book on blockchain governance with Primavera de Filippi and Wessel Reijers, to be published by MIT Press in August 2024. He is also working on an anthology on the history and development of blockchain technologies with Primavera de Filippi and Joel Dietz, also under contract with MIT Press. In terms of his editorial experience, Morshed is an editor of the Internet Policy Review's *Glossary of Decentralised Technosocial Systems*, and is guest editing a special issue on trust in emerging technologies for *Regulation & Governance* as well as a special issue on legitimacy and trust in digital governance for *Information, Communication & Society*.

**Simon Pek** is an Associate Professor in the area of business and society at the Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria. The majority of his current research focuses on how democratic innovations like mini-publics and sortition can be used in democratic organizations like cooperatives, universities, and labour unions. He has published in journals including the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*, and *Strategic Management Journal*. Simon currently serves as an Associate Editor at the *Journal of Management Inquiry* and *Business & Society*.

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