

# Essays in Honour of Johnston Birchall

This special issue of the *Journal of Entrepreneurial and Organizational Diversity* (JEOD) — ‘Co-operative firms, participatory culture, and contemporary challenges: Essays in honour of Johnston Birchall’ will be published in 2023. Its aim is to bring the work of Johnston Birchall to life by addressing current issues in social and economic recovery, and discuss his scholarly legacy and its relevance for contemporary economic and societal challenges across world regions, as well as from all sectors of activities. This includes areas of traditional co-operative activities as well as in education, social services, healthcare, and cultural industries.

In outlining the focus of the special issue, guest editors — Silvia Sacchetti, Lou Hammond Ketilson, and Richard Simmons — point to Johnston Birchall's dedication to the study of co-operative organisations. How his work identified what co-operatives mean for people, and for the resilience of communities and work. Johnston's work provides evidence as to why co-operatives can be a source of sustainable growth for local economies, how co-operators have organised and govern themselves to provide answers to common challenges, and how it is possible to take the advantages of co-operation to a larger scale. They point to the COVID-19 pandemic bringing the role of the state and public investments back onto the economic policy agenda and where the co-operative model has never been more relevant, both as a possible solution that complements economic policy for public value creation, as well as a way to critically reconsider the assumptions on which the co-operative model and the investor-owned business model are grounded. At the same time, the co-operative culture of member participation requires even more consideration in the face of the limitations imposed by social distancing and the paradigmatic changes in the use of digital platforms.

The special issue will include both conceptual and empirical papers, and themes include:

- How co-operatives have responded to previous crises and how are they responding to the current one.
- How co-operatives can contribute to mitigate the inequalities amplified by the current crisis.
- How co-operatives contribute to mitigating the uncertainty related to current circumstances for their members and workers.
- Whether the participatory culture has survived the effects of social distancing.
- The potential of co-operatives to heal current divisions within our citizenry.
- How co-operatives use digitalisation to their advantage and how they can withstand the risks of participation failure, depersonalization and dangers of isolation that people are currently suffering.
- The specific organisational capabilities and governance innovations that can support current challenges.

## JEOD Guest editors

Silvia Sacchetti (University of Trento, Italy) — co-author with Johnston Birchall of *The Comparative Advantages of Single and Multi-stakeholder Co-operatives* (2017, 2018).

Lou Hammond Ketilson, (Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, Canada) — co-author with Johnston Birchall of *Resilience of the cooperative business model in times of crisis. International Labour Organisation* (2009).

Richard Simmons (University of Stirling, Scotland, UK) — co-author with Johnston Birchall of multiple articles, reports, and book chapters and, with Birchall, co-director of the Mutuality Research programme.