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The Journal of Rural Cooperation in Perspective: An Editorial Overview

by
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Abstract

A perusal of near 300 articles making up the editorial work of the *Journal of Rural Cooperation* throughout the years 1979-2005 allows to track down a sequence of significant trends. These start with a number of issues that we will denote as part of a “passé” agenda, through a re-thinking of rural society as a “weak” society and a shift, by rural cooperatives, from traditional roles to new global challenges, mainly caused by the economic global market and its consequent competitive drive. Given the importance of the Kibbutz as a phenomenon that lay at the core of the concept of “rural cooperative community”, a short section in this overview will be devoted to the role played by the kibbutz in the editorial endeavor of the JRC. In what follows, we present major signposts of change in the contents of the JRC, based on the editorials of special thematic issues and a selection of articles herein.

Major trends throughout the years

A “passé” agenda

The period from 1979 to the early 1980s can be characterized by an interest in issues that, with the hindsight of time, appear now as naïve and part of a “passé” agenda. First, the study of “cooperatives” in the Communist Block, although not exempt from criticism of planned collective policies in agriculture, gave more support to group and collective farming than to the revival of individual farming (*Michael Cernea and Yehuda Don, 1977*). As to the Western countries, a bias towards a comprehensive, village based model of cooperatives in rural development can be discerned: “only producer/residential coops will affect members sufficiently to change their life styles and values” (*Keith A. Lehrer and John G. Craig, 1979*). This view is strongly reminiscent of the Israeli model of a cooperative which coincides with the residential-community aspect of the local village. In those years this model raised a considerable interest as a potential tool of rural development in developing countries. According to *John Sudarski (1979)* the *moshav* was regarded as a “high” model of cooperative organization. In spite of the doubts as to its suitability to traditional cultures in Africa

(Gabriel Gosselin, 1974; Guy Belloncle, 1986) the Israeli experience was long seen as a valid tool of rural “modernization” in such countries as Tanzania and Zambia (C.K. Omari, 1977; J.A. Alao, 1977; Moshe Z. Prives, 1976). The demise of the *moshav ovdim* as a major tool of cooperative development in Israel (Moshe Schwartz, 1999) and the persistent crisis of the Kibbutz (some 20 articles spanning a period of 10 years (Amir Helman, 1994 – Ronen Manor, 2004) contributed to a re-appraisal of the Israeli model of rural cooperative.

Farmer's organizations, cooperatives, local initiatives and social movements (JRC, Vol. XIX/1-2, 1991)

This double issue is based on the work session organized by CIRCOM at the XIVth European Congress of Rural Sociology held in Giessen, Germany, in July 1990. The venue of the congress – not far away from the former border between West and East Germany, and its timing – soon after the political upheaval in Eastern Europe and the crumbling of the Berlin wall – invited a lively participation of Eastern colleagues and enabled the congress to acquaint itself with field realities in both parts of Germany.

In the Western context, a pervasive sense of crisis points to the difficulty of conciliating the need for economic strength to cope with mounting market competition on the one hand, and the call for more solidarity to care for the weaker participants and for environmental values, on the other. These externalities are compounded by problems of internal control from which even such a highly ideological system like the Kibbutz is not exempt.

In the former Eastern block, the reality is of farmers who know what they have left behind, yet still have no idea of what will replace it. What mainly predominate are issues of concern for rural populations at the crossroads. What forms of farmers' organizations will emerge to replace old ones, capable of coping with basic food supply and, at the same time with the need for integration in a free market economy?

All the contributions by the Eastern European colleagues seem to share an overall criticism of centrally planned economies and a rejection of state monopoly over the agricultural sector.

For many reasons, both the West and the East sides seem to be away from an all-European model of rural development.

“Weak” society and rural society: old concepts and new challenges (JRC, Vol. 21, 1993)

This was the heading of the workshop chaired by CIRCOM at the VII World Congress of Rural Sociology entitled *Rural Society in the Changing World Order* held in August 1992 at Penn State University, US. The seven articles presented at this workshop and making up the 1993/1 thematic issue of the JRC, attempt new approaches to rural issues, based on then “fashionable” topics like rejecting the limitations of Western Cartesian reductionism; the increased importance of the “embeddedness” of

locality in a particular labor process and environment; genetic and crop systems diversity and restraint vis-à-vis consumption and non-renewable resources.

The kibbutz in the mid 1990s: crisis and changes (JRC, Vol. 22, 1994)

As a uniquely complex organization, the Kibbutz has been fraught from its inception with problems typical of value laden reformatory institutions. The frequent crises which emerged throughout its history led to a series of ad hoc solutions enabling the kibbutz to adapt to changing conditions and, in turn, to maintain a certain balance between the contrasting demands of the internal value system and the external surrounding ambiance.

Most analysts of the kibbutz seem to agree that the mid-1980s signaled a turning point in the history of kibbutz crises. The cumulative negative effect of a number of exogenous and endogenous factors contributed to a new awareness, among members and decision makers alike, of the need for a concerted effort aiming to find new solutions to huge indebtedness and a pervasive insecurity as to the righteousness of the old ideological kibbutz tenets. This conferred a new dimension to the “crisis-ensuing changes” issue. The debate on the need for changes became more diffused, more polarized in its approaches and, recently, turned out operational through the implementation of a number of organizational changes in many kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz).

The contributed articles approach the topic from a variety of viewpoints and attempt answers to such queries as how did the recent crisis start and develop, what is the nature of the ensuing suggested changes, what are their directions and their possible repercussions on the future of the kibbutz.

Addendum (from Vol. 32/1, 2004). The “Renewed Kibbutz” by *Ronen Manor*: The article analyses the juridical redefinition of the kibbutz into two types: the “communal kibbutz” retaining most of its traditional collective tenets, and the “renewed kibbutz”, adopting new practices such as increasing privatization, differential rewards for work and allocation of ownership of apartments to the members

Rural cooperatives towards the new century: from traditional roles to new local and global challenges (JRC, 25th Anniversary Issue, Vol. 26/1-2, 1998)

Our Call for Papers for this anniversary edition invited contributions to a number of challenging issues, such as how to survive in an uncooperative world, the need to come up with new strategies to counter increased competition and to rethink cooperatives beyond traditional roles and models. The response was varied in content.

In his position paper, *Efraim Gil* observes signs of resistance to the alleged “triumph of capitalism” and suggests strategies for initiating a process of transformation from the prevailing hegemonic competitive ethos. Taking competitive and consensual economics as general paradigmatic references, *Stanley Maron* points to kibbutzim and guilds as prominent examples of the consensual approach and suggests that there is much to be learned from them. In their critique of neo-classical

economics, *Thomas W. Gray* and *Patrick H. Mooney* show how the resort to the “rational individual”, as a typical neo-classical metaphor, to justify the conversion of agricultural cooperatives in the US to investor oriented firms, restricts discussion and prevents taking into account the meta-economic components of cooperation. *Francisco Entrena* and *Eduardo Moyano* analyze the different reactions of Spanish farmer cooperatives to globalization and build a continuum of discourse types ranging from a situation which stresses the egalitarian-mutualistic ethos of cooperatives to one which views an instrumental adaptation to competitiveness as a necessity of our times. *Yair Levi* deals with the differential roles of multi-stakeholder cooperatives of the “hybrid” and “community” types and suggests possible implications from the perspective of the need to counter the threat of “demutualization”, especially of agricultural cooperatives. Against the background of worldwide unemployment and the European Community's concern about poverty, *Peter Davis* examines alternative policies to state and private expenditure and top-down supply of goods and services. A new focus on people not included in the conventional categories of owners of capital and waged workers is suggested. Based on a communitarian approach and an emphasis on the demand side of domestic economy, the author seeks to address the problem through the association of families and households in communitarian cooperative frameworks. *George Tseo* elaborates on the role and performance of the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) of China and draws a comparison between the Chinese and the Russian approach to property rights in rural and urban policies.

Globalization and the cooperative difference (JRC, Vol. 28/2, 2000)

This thematic issue contains selected papers presented at the ICA Research Forum Conference held in Québec City, Canada (28-29 August, 1999) on “Value and Enterprise for Co-operative Advantage”.

This selection on *Globalization and the Cooperative Difference* reflects our interest in one of the most discussed and controversial questions facing cooperatives today, namely what is meant by “difference”, why is this important and – if so – how can it be achieved? Two papers show how the challenge of “difference” can be faced by such diverse types of cooperatives as farmers' in the first case and consultants' in environmental issues, in the second. *Javier Caceres* and *James C. Lowe* address farmer cooperatives facing globalization. These tend to be big-sized, capital-intensive and increasingly biased towards a separation of ownership from usership and control. On the other hand, the cooperatives of the Finnish study by *Eliisa Troberg* are knowledge intensive and small sized, thus enabling to preserve the ownership-usership-control mix in the hands of the members. Despite the differences, cooperatives of both kinds can show their potentials for a cooperative difference: farmer cooperatives, by countering the tendency to issue external capital to “strengthen” the cooperative, thus avoiding their turning into “privatized cooperatives”; knowledge intensive cooperatives, by showing how new networking, fast actions and real time (as typical of information technology) can make hierarchical

and structured organizations obsolete and how common ownership, strong shared motivation and an integrative and directive leadership can reduce transaction costs and the relevance of agency theory.

Per Ove Røkholt and *Yair Levi* attempt to answer why “difference” is so important. According to Røkholt, cooperatives are based on a logic that is distinct from the image of rationality that seems to prevail in many current studies of cooperatives. The cooperative edge rests on what are commonly believed to be the “weaknesses” of cooperatives. It is the combination of business and member organization in mutual support that can enhance the kind of “solidarity-based loyalty” which captures the cooperative edge. To Levi, the double nature of cooperation as its reason d'être, is at the root of the socio-economic tension which accompanies cooperatives since their inception. Paradoxically, it can be said that what is supposed to “make the difference” is – in a way – what limits the cooperatives' ability to achieve it and explains their ambiguous position vis-a-vis the issue of difference, *i.e.*, whether the emphasis should be on strengthening their economic or social component.

Rural cooperatives and the global capital market: adaptation or resistance?
(JRC, Vol. 29/2, 2001)

Guest Editor, Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Department of Sociology, Weinberg Chair of Political Sociology, Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

In August 2000, at the occasion of the World Congress of Rural Sociology in Rio de Janeiro, a group of researchers responded to the Journal's call for papers to hold discussions on the development and dynamics of cooperatives in this era of globalization. More particularly, on the extent to which cooperatives manage to resist the transformations of the global environment, or are leaving the stage as particular entities and tend to melt into their environment by becoming less and less “different” vis a-vis the rest of society.

Contributors of articles view globalization as the universalization of modernity through a transformational process bearing its own significance and impacts. This notion indicates the formation of a world-wide connectedness of social phenomena and of awareness of social actors. More than in any previous epoch when conquests or domination set large parts of the world under one single authority, our era globalization has made the globe a space of links and interrelations among societies, groups and individuals from most diverse parts of the world.

In any case, globalization represents an unfriendly environment for cooperatives by its very tendency to uniformize social realities and structures. As such it but increases the acuteness of the long debate over “the cooperative difference”. By the impact of the material circumstances which it represents, globalization tends both to reduce differences between cooperative and non-cooperative settings, and to amplify differences within and among cooperatives. All in all, globalization encourages cooperatives to adjust to the capitalistic market and to pursue maximum economic gain, and to disregard the importance of non-economic considerations. This undermines the cooperatives' call to pursue

social goals to which economic ambitions have to be subordinated.

Considering first the resulting challenges faced by cooperatives in this era of globalization, *Yair Levi* reminds, indeed, that the logics of global capitalism and the ideals of cooperatives are basically divergent. The pursuit of financial and economic profit tends to underrate non-economic considerations, while the cooperative ideal, in contrast, is primarily preoccupied by the member's and the community's welfare. This, he says, is its *raison d'être* and the justification of its endeavor. Elaborating on Polanyi's approach, Levi draws upon the notion of "disembeddedness" (contrasting with "embeddedness") which indicates the isolation of economic considerations from other institutional aspects of social life. His analysis leads to a general conclusion that the higher the degree of disembeddedness (in this particular sense) both at the global-macro and micro-organizational levels, the more non-economic aspects are likely to be subordinated to economic considerations, and the less cooperatives are able to retain their unique character vis-a-vis their environment. It is only when things go the other way round, that is, when economic factors are dealt with in a larger frame of reference where non-economic preoccupations prevail that they may hope to save the "cooperative difference". In other words, globalization, which means above all the expansion of the capitalistic spirit, presents cooperatives with challenges that are more difficult than ever. *Nora Presno Amodeo* pursues this discussion in the Latin American context and suggests that one major way, if not the only one, to resist non-congruent organizational isomorphism, is to deepen our understanding of cooperative values and to incorporate them into competitive frameworks and strategies, where trust and loyalty among members become liabilities for the pursuit of economic competitive activities. *Manuel Belo Moreira* sustains this analysis. For him, globalization brought with it a set of limiting factors and constraints, not only for the functioning of cooperatives as an economic activity with unique characteristics, but also with respect to their relationship with the State. The most constraining factor is the pressure put on the State causing the weakening of institutions able to regulate the market. Though, such mechanisms are more crucial today than ever, since globalization means, above all, that at any time and in any place, local products face competition with products from all over the planet. Moreover, cooperatives now face a multitude of small agents – legal or illegal. Hence, globalization aggravates the competitive environment of cooperatives by subjecting them to a genuine competitive squeeze.

Considering, at this point, the cooperative experiences in this era of globalization, *Farid Eid* and *Andrea E.B. Pimentel* describe the concrete rural and urban cooperatives that developed in Brazil since the end of the 1980s as part of the Solidarity Economy. The economic structures still express the aspiration to implement solidarity among participants but have to cope with new needs in the areas of technology, administration and political education and to commit themselves to the search for equilibrium between social and economic considerations. Brazilian landless workers who set up agricultural cooperatives must adjust to the dominant economy and adopt arrangements warranting their social and economic viability, while dissociating

themselves from the semantics that link the notion of “business” solely to the capitalist logic. By emphasizing a qualitative change that is currently taking place in Brazil's agricultural cooperatives in the context of globalization, *Sigismundo Bialoskorski Neto* pursues a switch from vertical integration to virtual cooperation. Vertical integration points out to a process where agricultural cooperatives experience industrialization by developing the industrial processing of their agricultural produce thereby increasing their sustainability and economic viability. Vertical integration draws out a business cooperatives experience strategy that prevailed in Brazilian agricultural cooperatives until the 1980s. This strategy succeeded to encourage the expansion and strengthening of cooperatives under the form of large agro-industrial plants and complex organizational structures. More recently, however, one witnesses the emergence of agro-industrial cooperative organizations responding to a new model and which may be called “virtual cooperatives”. Here the issue is about organizations that do not possess significant assets or industrial plants of their own, but which consist of networks of cooperatives cooperating among themselves and defining a common and coordinated business strategy. This development is the direct outcome of the reality created by globalization and its institutional environment.

This analysis already touches upon the transformations of cooperatives in this era of globalization. *Thomas W. Gray, William Heffernan and Mary Hendrickson* start from this point to emphasize that agricultural cooperatives are now undergoing major changes as a result of major transformations within their environment. They underline, for instance, the importance of biotechnology and information technologies. Such developments have favored the formation of agro-food chains by multi-national corporations. These chains, they contend, are the outcome of a variety of new forms of cooperation between enterprises – mergers, acquisitions, and alliances. Cooperatives as well have been a part of this development – they were included for their specific know-how, supply power and capacity to take care of primary commodities. The cooperatives' links with farmers have created markets for biotechnology in the top-down direction, and have warranted the material for industrial processing, in the opposite bottom-up direction. Though many agricultural cooperatives have it hard to find an appropriate positioning within these new complex markets, their specializations do grant them some advantages. No few are able to play at the new rules dictated by multi-national competition. On the way, however, to become more efficient and productive, they get more bureaucratized and centralized, and tend to forfeit their “cooperative difference”.

Eliezer Ben-Rafael, at this stage, goes back to theory and considers a variety of social experiments, which similarly illustrate the Proudhonian-Comtian-Durkheimian emphases on cooperation and collective solidarity, within societies dominated by market economy and the philosophy of progress which nowadays find their ultimate expression in globalization. These experiments, which put the cooperative vision to empirical test, show the tensions and difficulties involved, as well as their potentialities. Focusing on the kibbutz, the Mondragón complex and the American communes,

it is now shown that beyond the differences of social and historical context as well as the singularity of each specific case, the same dilemmas appear everywhere. One may summarize these dilemmas into a twofold question: how far collectivism may concur with individualism, and solidarity and egalitarianism with social differentiation and conflict. The analysis shows that the tension between the enterprise and the community principles has gradually given way to the predominance of the former over the latter. The collective's survival, it appears, is endangered when it is threatened by insolvency – *ipso facto* – and when it is successful – as it risks then to be torn apart by divergent interests which impend on its moral purposes.

These articles circumscribe the problematique of the cooperative experience in the new era we experience. As a whole, they show the difficulties for cooperatives to retain their “difference” and thereby open the way to a new discussion about cooperatives. Beyond the question of “how to adjust to globalization”, this discussion focuses on the most central issue of “what strategies are to be adopted by cooperatives that respond to the very essence of globalization”. Such a course might not only set the cooperative movement in an attack position but also bring it back to its initial stages when it emerged, armed with banners proclaiming universal ideals. This, however, is already the topic of another conference.

Eliezer Ben-Rafael

Cooperatives, agrotourism and women's role (Vol. 31/1, 2003)

This issue features the five articles presented at the thematic session on Cooperatives, Agrotourism and Women's Role as part of the International Cooperative Alliance Research Conference on “Local Society and Global Economy: The Role of Cooperatives” (Naoussa Imathias/Tessaloniki, Greece, 9-12 May, 2002).

The terminology used by the authors is diversified: “agritourism”, “agrotourism” “ecotourism” and “rural tourism” appear, bearing a meaning of difference, or equivalence, as the case may be. A common denominator, however, clearly emerges. Being ideally based on grassroots origin and on a clear not-for-profit orientation, cooperatives enable local people to pool resources and to build economic and social capital attuned to local needs and cultures. Under the growing threat of delocalization as part of economic globalization, the combination of ecotourism and strong cooperative movements can help the local community and tourists to join efforts towards its protection against such negative effects. Most importantly, we have seen how the stereotypical superiority of men over women as regards power and ownership can be overturned in favor of women.

This latter theme is presented and analyzed against the background of the rich Greek experience. *Leonidas Kazakopoulos* and *Isabella Gidarakou* provide a detailed account of the women's led cooperatives in the field of tourists' accommodation and the production and sale of local traditional crafts. The issue is presented from a niche market perspective, using three case studies to highlight the preconditions and the development characteristics of this approach. *Stavriani Koutsou* and *Olga Iakovidou*

emphasize the social added value of women's tourism cooperatives as a source of income independence, power of control and self-esteem. However, major problems still stand in their way to success, such as the need to emancipate themselves from the state subsidy syndrome and to acquire the tools enabling them to become competitive enterprises. *Hélène Kovani* views the issue from a perspective of the necessary linkage of tourism to a kind of agriculture that respects its potential to counter the threat of globalization and profit maximization. It is in this context that cooperatives are called to play a major role. At present, the qualitative kind of action suggested is positioned at the fringe of productivist agriculture and mass tourism. Hence the need for alternative policies. *Ronit Grossman* deals with the birth and development of the tourism industry in an Israeli Kibbutz. Based on anthropological fieldwork, the author analyzes two cases where the tourists were invited to celebrate festivities with the kibbutz members, and offers some implications as to the changes that occurred in the local identity and boundaries of the kibbutz. *Yair Levi* argues that both cooperatives in their nonprofit orientation and ecotourism, in its quest for non-consuming resource use and policies of de-commodification, depend on qualitative criteria to assess their performance. A number of cases help to highlight the potentials and the limitations involved.

Thus far we have examined the editing of the JRC along a number of headlines that can be regarded as many signposts in a cross-national development of rural cooperatives.

The November 2004 Valencia Conference¹ offered a major topic worth exploring along a longitudinal perspective, namely the “agriculture-cooperation duality”.

Beyond the “agriculture-cooperation duality”

That agriculture and cooperation are almost world-wide overlapping phenomena is well-established. This can be noted in countries at different levels of development. However, as soon as the economic conditions permit it, an agricultural exodus, as distinct from rural exodus, should be encouraged, to mean that people no longer in farm occupations could remain in the rural areas, thus preventing an overgrowth of the urban sector. The question arises to what extent new off-farm occupations can develop through cooperative forms of organization. An overview of the JRC allows for the identification of several kinds of off-farm policies and occupations.

Production

Jenny Clegg (Vol. 24/2, 1996) considers a number of non-agricultural crafts under the Chinese system of rural shareholding as a form of multi-stakeholder cooperation. The focus of analysis are the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs). *Maxime Haubert* (Vol. XIII/2, 1985) and *Susana Narotzky* (Vol. XVI/1-2, 1988) deal with the issue in the context of Andalusia and Catalonia, respectively. In the first case, the focus is on the working conditions of worker cooperatives, mainly in rural sewing

¹ *Cooperativismo Agrario y Desarrollo Rural*. Congreso Internacional, 25 Aniversario CEGEA (Centro de Investigación y Especialización en Gestión de Empresas Agroalimentarias) Valencia, 2004.

factories. In the second case, garment manufactory industries have been studied as a means of farm and family reproduction in a dry-farming area.

Welfare services

Victor Pestoff (Vol. XXIII/2, 1995) takes the case of day-care centres in some parts of rural Sweden to highlight the issue of parental and worker cooperatives as means of citizen's empowerment as co-producers. *Peter Davis* (Vol. 26/1-2, 1998) argues for the application of cooperative principles to families and friendship groups as part of anti-poverty policies. More recently, *Elizabeth Kim Coontz* and *Elizabeth Esper* (Vol. 31/2, 2003) have taken the issue of cooperative kindergarten against the background of rural California.

Community development and social economy projects

A variety of off-farm occupations have been developed in marginal rural locations exposed to out-migration, impoverishment and unemployment. Detailed account of the creation of community cooperatives in such projects can be found in *Nora Stettner* (Vol. XIII/1-2, 1980) and *Mike Gordon* (Vol. 30/2, 2002). Both articles refer to the British Islands.

Off-farm employment beyond the traditional models of the kibbutz and the moshav

Diversification of employment beyond agriculture has been a current policy of the kibbutz since the 1950s. In 2000, kibbutz industry included 360 factories in 270 kibbutz communities with a value of exports of NIS 3.6 billion (9.4 percent of national total). *Baruch A. Kipnis* and *Meir Avinoam* (Vol. XI/1, 1983) and *Yitzhak Samuel and Sibylle Heilbrunn* (Vol. 29/1, 2001) have examined different types of business ventures emerging in the kibbutz and presented ways of classifying them.

Unlike the kibbutz which is based on collective work, the traditional moshav is based on individual production of agricultural producers. The efforts toward employment diversification have produced studies on the possibility of establishing non-agricultural villages: *Naomi Nevo* (Vol. VIII/1-2, 1980); *Smadar Ottolenghi and Yair Yakir* (Vol. XI/2, 1983); *David Bentulila* (Vol. XII/1-2, 1984).

Summing up

The foregoing has offered a glimpse of the content of the JRC throughout more than 25 years of publishing. The selection of the above "signposts" could be interpreted as biased towards a sociological approach to the content analysis. This is not to underestimate the scope and importance of the more technical and economic articles published, but rather to point to the usefulness of using thematic issues to highlight topics of particular interest.

Comparing topics of major concern to contributors of articles in the first years of the Journal² and now, shows the changes we have gone through. Then, typical motives were the need to maintain a fruitful dialogue between cooperatives and the government; whether or not traditional forms of mutual aid in developing countries can provide a basis for modern cooperatives; and assessing the performance of “cooperatives”, mainly agricultural, in the Soviet Block. Among the topics of major interest today we find globalization and competition; how to enter the era of telecommunication; the need for social auditing; mergers; financing; how to match the increased need for multi-stakeholder cooperatives and the need for an appropriate democratic control; how to tackle unemployment and social exclusion and what is the role of cooperatives therein, as part of the social economy and the “nonprofit” sector.

The issue is compounded by increasing privatization and downsizing in both the public and the private sector. Rural contexts are no exception, regardless of the scope of agriculture therein. The traditional association of cooperatives with agricultural production and services supply may need to be re-examined. The new changes in the notion of “work” suggest new combinations of cooperatives and related social economy organizations, and non-agricultural occupations in both urban and rural areas.

On a higher level of abstraction, the notion of “rural” in the name of the Journal implies a two-fold commitment to “difference”: between a rural and a non-rural context and between a cooperative and a non-cooperative organization. Both seem to be threatened by external pressures that tend to homogenize them to growing urban and capitalist contexts. Whereas the first is a topic of major concern to rural sociologists, the latter is a major concern to all of us, as cooperators and advocates of the social economy. Both, however, have to be seen in combination, from an inevitable perspective of globalization.

Trying to summarize 25 years in the life of the JRC, a number of considerations seem to stand out as particularly important to the editing enterprise: 1) the style of editorship; 2) the content of the journal; 3) possible areas of collaboration between journals of cooperative and related organizations in different countries. As to the first, useful criteria for assessing the editing enterprise could be suggested, like the extent of openness versus a local-parochial approach to topics dealt with; the second criterion refers to the extent of diversification beyond the conventional realm of articles. Finally, the third category of considerations presents editors of different cooperative journals with such possible avenues of collaboration as pooling of resources; exchange of articles according to specific areas of interest; periodical joint publications, and more. The following figure offers a schematic view of how a number of cooperative journals we know about, could cluster around a potential joint framework.

² No significant difference was found between the contents in the years 1973-1979 marking the term of Professor Yehuda Don, the first Editor of JRC, and the first years of this author's editorship.

Figure 1: A framework for collaboration between cooperative journals

