



- 01 Helene Austvoll,  
Kooperativet co-founder
- 02 Kooperativet pick-up  
point in Mathallen food  
market in Oslo



## HERE TO HELP *Global*

### Preface

Whether it's a farmer-friendly fruit-and-veg seller in Oslo, a modern-day concierge service on the streets of Paris or a rehabilitation programme-cum-grocery store in Hong Kong, these chivalrous ventures in bustling cities create careers, cohesion and community spirit.

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REPORT  
City heroes

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### Kooperativet *Eidsberg, Norway*

Started in 2013 to cater to Osloivians hungry for freshly grown fruit and vegetables, Kooperativet connects consumers with farms around the city. Favoured by those without the time or space to grow their own, the organic produce is available for collection twice a month via a subscription service.

"We saw that the food market didn't satisfy either the consumer or the farmer," says co-founder Helene Austvoll when MONOCLE visits Lislrud, a farm south of the Norwegian capital and one of the 20 collaborators that provide vegetables to the scheme. "We wanted to start something that gave value to those who eat the food and added value for the farmers."

Literally meaning "The Co-operative" in Norwegian, the organisation is run as such and co-owned by its members. For €25, members receive a large carrier bag (artfully branded and made from natural jute) full of organically grown fruit and



vegetables. One week this may include crisp lettuce or juicy red peppers, another firm carrots or leeks. Bags are picked up at Oslo's Mathallen food market in the recently revived Vulkan area as well as two other points in the city.

Kooperativet's members also assist with the packing and daily logistics of the pick-up and the entire operation is dependent on volunteers. This keeps prices low and allows farmers to retain almost all of their profits (about €23 of every €25 sold).

"This is incredibly important to us," says farmer Urs Gamper. In Norway, organic smallholders like him rely on networks of customers, including restaurants and farmers' markets, to which Kooperativet is a welcome and fast-growing addition. "Many Kooperativet members visit us to see how the food is made and help in the field, too."

The scheme has always had support and 1,000 people signed up at the launch. Although Kooperativet initially capped its membership at 400, it has grown to its current number of 1,700. "This year we've also started to offer dairy bags and meat," says Austvoll. — LB



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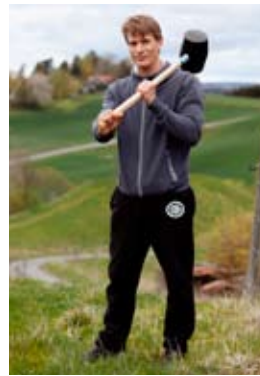
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- 01 Farmer's wife Anne Gamper picking produce at Lislud
- 02 Members help out at contributing farms
- 03 Sheep at Lislud
- 04 Amanda Perri of Kooperativet
- 05 Members collect fresh veg from Mathallen
- 06 Lending a hand
- 07 €25 buys Kooperativet members one bag of organic produce
- 08 Pitching in on a farm
- 09 Farmer Urs Gamper, who runs Lislud



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### Three takeaways Kooperativet

**Goods:** Since Helene Austvoll and nine other co-founders started Kooperativet in 2013, 20 smallholders around the capital have been supplying seasonal food bags twice a month.

**Cost:** Grocery bags cost €25 per pick-up and an annual membership fee costs €30. Out of each purchase, €23 goes directly to the farmer.

**Latest:** This year dairy bags (€50) and meat bags (€62) have been added to the service.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: THOMAS EKSTRÖM, VASANTHA YOGANANTHAN



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## Lulu Dans ma Rue *Paris*

Since the start of April the suburb of Saint-Paul in Paris has seemed all the friendlier thanks to a convivial new start-up. The inspiration of Charles Edouard Vincent, Lulu Dans ma Rue is a modern take on a hotel concierge service, manned by a small but helpful community of volunteers who are happy to shine shoes, look after keys, walk dogs or press shirts; we call them the Lulus.

Inside its pretty JCDecaux-designed kiosk, Sebastien Juin is busy filling an order book and fielding questions from curious passers-by. In chillier moments he and his colleagues wear black sleeveless goose-down jackets embroidered with the company's symbol: a fictional fellow named Lulu from whom the company takes its name.

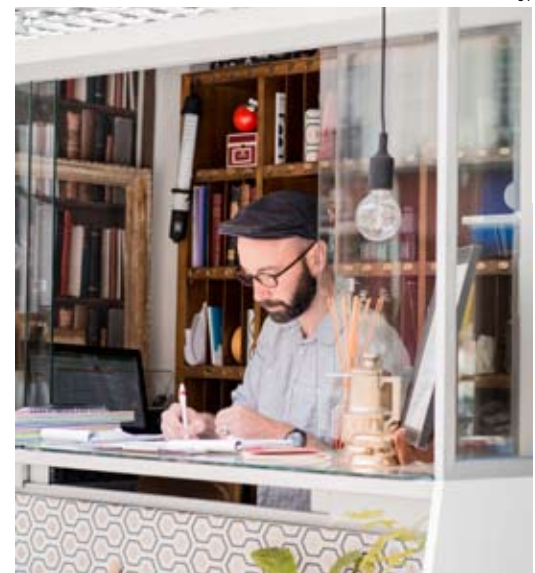
As well as providing handy services, the scheme recruits helpers (called Lulus) from all over and with various skillsets, while charging a 15 per cent fee for connecting them with customers. Out of the current Lulus, 90 per cent are locals, from students in need of pocket money to retirees. A Lulu's time will set you back €5 for 20 minutes of service.

"Sometimes we focus on our own personal development and our own



- 01 Charles Edouard Vincent, founder of Lulu Dans ma Rue
- 02 Sebastien Juin, its first concierge

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happiness. Society can be selfish but Lulu's promise is beautiful," says Vincent, who began his career at Netscape and then went on to work for SAP. After pondering his heavy workload, Vincent decided to pursue a more fulfilling career and joined the Emmaus Association charity. While working at the organisation he launched the homelessness charity Emmaus Defi but at the back of his mind he was always planning the launch of Lulu Dans ma Rue.

"Our challenge is to create a community of Lulus in each area," says Vincent. "Hopefully we will get between 100 and 200 in each arrondissement." For now bookings must either be made in person at the kiosk or on the website but Vincent plans to add more premises and an app to make getting in contact easier. As one of 15 projects chosen by French president François Hollande to receive support this year, the venture has the necessary backing to succeed and Vincent remains sanguine about the future. "Whatever happens we will have generated some humanity in our everyday life and that's beautiful to be part of." — DHZ

#### Street wise Lulu Dans ma Rue

**Progress:** Just one month after opening its first kiosk, Lulu Dans ma Rue had carried out 225 separate jobs and fielded questions from about 3,600 visitors.

**Online:** Having an active street presence has helped the service get attention online. The site has attracted some 10,000 visitors since its launch.

**Pay:** The Lulus, who connect with clients through the organisation, can earn as much as €1,300 a month for odd jobs.



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- 01 Sebastien Juin and Amid Houd talk through the day's schedule
- 02 Cubbies in Lulu's kiosk
- 03 Kiosk interior
- 04 Juin's service with a smile
- 05 Visiting a Lulu user
- 06 Houd ironing
- 07 Houd tending plants



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PHOTOGRAPHERS: VASANTHA YOGANANTHAN, AMANDA KEO



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## Farm Fresh 330 Hong Kong

Small spaces and high rents are serious barriers to entry for businesses in Hong Kong but Sania Yau – the CEO of 50-year-old psychiatric rehabilitation association New Life – is addressing the problem with Farm Fresh 330. Its three shops sell organic produce and provide employment to rehabilitate members of society who may otherwise struggle.

The pronunciation of 330 in Cantonese is similar to the words "body, mind and spirit" and these are the main tenets that the project seeks to address. Most of the staff here are enrolled as part of a rehabilitation programme for a particular form of mental illness. "They have a job, plus an opportunity to regain their integrity and respect," says Yau. "Traditional options for the mentally ill involve traineeship programmes provided by social workers, occupational therapists and hospitals. Our role is to supplement the traditional structure with employment opportunities."

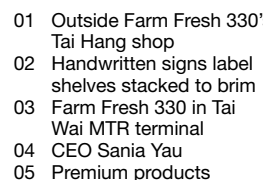
Farm Fresh 330, the face of the organisation, combines a pragmatic business model with an altruistic social mission. Active in New Life since 1996, Yau started her career as a social worker and became the CEO in 2009. "We had launched social enterprises in 1994 to provide rehabilitating training for people in need while creating employment for



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them. People in Hong Kong became so much more health conscious so our farms went totally organic," she says, from one of her shops in Tai Wai. Along with the New Life Farm in Tuen Mun, Yau operates Café 330 (in the city's Prince of Wales hospital) and 20 subsidiary projects under the New Life banner.

By prioritising the quality of its products, Farm Fresh 330's real success is that as well as helping people, it's also a commercially viable model in the fiercely competitive Hong Kong business market, thanks in part to the simple, just-so branding and high standards of service. "Our staff are as capable as any others, just as our products are as fine as those in any premium grocery store. It gives us more confidence that social enterprises can also be competitive, which is contrary to the public perception." — KL

#### Taking stock Farm Fresh 330

**Space:** Commercial space in Hong Kong is the most expensive in the world. New York, Paris, London and Tokyo are in the same league.

**Expertise:** Sania Yau has worked at New Life for nearly 20 years and has been chief executive for the past six.

**History:** The New Life organisation started in 1965 and began its social-rehabilitation projects in 1994. Five years ago it rebranded the New Life Organic Shop and became Farm Fresh 330.