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Special issue on the Cooperative Identity - II

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These two special issues of the Review of International Co-operation (Volume 107/2023 and Volume 108/2023) are dedicated to exploring the theme of Cooperative Identity. They comprise a collection of 24 selected research papers, which were initially presented and discussed at the ICA Cooperative Research Conference held from November 28th to 30th, 2021 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. This conference took place as part of the 33rd World Cooperative Congress, which was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from December 1st to 3rd, 2021.

The papers included in these special issues offer profound insights and reflections on Cooperative Identity, examining it through various thematic lenses such as **Deepening, Diversity, Challenges, Entrepreneurial Innovation, Institutionalisation, and Tools.** Each paper provides an in-depth exploration of Cooperative Identity within these different thematic dimensions, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of this important topic.

Editors of this special issue
Akira Kurimoto, Cynthia Giagnocavo, Sidsel Grimstad, Sonja Novkovic, Isaac K. Nyamongo, Claudia Sanchez Bajo, Seungkwon Jang and Hyungsik Eum

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Special issue on the Cooperative Identity - II

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Foreword

As Chair of the Cooperative Identity Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance board of directors, I am pleased and honored to introduce these two volumes of significant contributions to the exploration of our cooperative identity by members of the global cooperative research community.

Imagine the possibility that we, as individual human beings, were unable to establish a sense of our own personal identity in life. We would wander adrift in a world without purpose or self-direction. This unfortunately is the case for too many organizations today.

The Statement on the Cooperative Identity - encompassing as it does a definition of a cooperative and a clear articulation of the cooperative principles and values - is the guiding star of our cooperative movement, allowing local, regional, and global cooperatives to carry forward a unique purpose and calling.

The 33rd Global Cooperative Congress, held in Seoul, Korea in December 2021, offered an in-depth analysis of the many diverse aspects of our cooperative identity. Integral to the Congress was the convening of the Cooperative Research Conference, bringing together scholars and practitioners from across the globe.

I applaud the decision of the editors of the Review of International Co-operation to devote two special issues of the Review of International Co-operation to the topic of Cooperative Identity. The selected research papers that are included in these two issues offer ample evidence that the cooperative way of life is of ever-increasing importance in a world of deepening complexity.

Enjoy the thoughts and challenges contained herein. May they inspire you to spread our cooperative identity and spirit far and wide and to take even greater personal action to benefit people across the globe.

Martin Lowery, Ph.D., Chair of the ICA Cooperative Identity Committee

Introduction

Akira Kurimoto[1] and Hyungsik Eum[2]

The cooperative model stands out among the various enterprise and organization models due to its unique characteristics. In addition to being a people-centered and value-based organization, one of its notable aspects is that its identity has been defined by cooperatives themselves through their international network, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). The most recent edition of this definition is the ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity, which was adopted in Manchester in 1995 at the 31st World Cooperative Congress. This Statement holds great significance as it outlined the cooperative and ethical values that underpin the principles elaborated by the founders of the cooperative movement. It also provided a clear definition of the cooperative business model and updated the Cooperative Principles to reflect the contemporary features of the movement. Notably, the 7th Principle of Concern for Community was included for the first time, acknowledging the changing world and the role of cooperatives within it.

To examine the implementation and challenges of the Cooperative Identity in today's world, the ICA held the 33rd World Cooperative Congress on the theme of "Deepening our Cooperative Identity" in Seoul, Korea and online on 1-3 December 2021. In preparation for the Congress, the ICA Cooperative Research Conference took place in Seoul and online from November 28-30, 2021. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference adopted a hybrid format and organized sessions in two different time zones. While this arrangement attracted numerous contributions, it experienced limited active participation and encountered some technical difficulties. In conjunction with the 3rd International Forum on Cooperative Law held within the same framework, these research events consisted of 62 sessions with a total of 233 presentations delivered by 335 authors and panelists from 47 countries.

1 Chair, ICA Committee on Cooperative Research.
2 Director of research, ICA

To recognize the value of these contributions and contribute to the ongoing discussion on the Cooperative Identity, which is led by the Cooperative Identity Advisory Group, the ICA Committee on Cooperative Research (CCR) decided to publish selected papers as two special issues of the Review of International Co-operation. The editorial team for these special issues on the Cooperative Identity comprises six CCR executive members (Akira Kurimoto as chair, Cynthia Giagnocavo representing Europe, Sidsel Grimstad representing Asia-Pacific, Sonja Novkovic representing North America, Claudia Sanchez Bajo representing South America, Isaac K. Nyamongo representing Africa) and an invited editor (Seungkwon Jang from Sungkonghoe University, Korea). The editorial team received technical assistance from Hyungsik Eum, Director of research at the ICA. After a thorough analysis of papers presented at the conference, 24 papers were selected for inclusion in the volumes. These selected papers cover various cooperative sectors, including housing, agricultural, consumer, social, banking, worker and insurance. They also represent a diverse range of countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Korea, Sri Lanka, Japan, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, the US, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Cuba.

The first volume (107/2023) provides a comprehensive exploration of Cooperative Identity, examining its implementation, diversity, and challenges across different contexts and historical traditions. By exploring these topics, they contribute to a deeper understanding of the Cooperative Identity and its resilience in the face of evolving circumstances.

The section titled ***"Deepening the Cooperative Identity"*** consists of five articles that contribute to a profound understanding of Cooperative Identity by analysing its implementation in the field. In the article **"Operationalizing the Cooperative Identity"**, Sonja Novkovic and Karen Miner, with contributions by Erbin Crowell, Balu Iyer and Fred Freundlich, provide tangible examples of values-based practices that integrate Cooperative Values into long-term planning, strategy, and operations. They explore the advantage of the cooperative model in integrating economic, social and ecological concerns. In **"Walking the talk: Cooperative Identity and Humanistic Governance"**, Cian McMahon, Karen Miner and Sonja Novkovic propose a framework for addressing governance issues in a manner consistent with Cooperative Values, Principles and purpose. They illustrate "humanistic cooperative governance" through selected case studies across different types of cooperatives. Suzane Grimm and Dimas de Oliveira Estevam's article, **"La Participación Femenina en el Cooperativismo Brasileño y Mundial** (Women's Participation in Brazilian and World Cooperativism)**"** analyses women's participation in the Brazilian and global cooperative movement. It presents the Co-operative Women's Guild and the ICA as institutions that promote women's participation in the cooperative movement worldwide. The article also highlights examples of Brazilian cooperative movement and government initiatives. Billy Ndengeyingoma's article, **"Trust and Solidarity: The Ethics of Means of Cooperative Housing in Kigali, Rwanda"**, explores why housing cooperative members in Kigali perceive cooperatives as a suitable organisational form to meet their housing objectives. The central argument is that cooperative members consider solidarity and trust as appropriate "ethics of means" to fulfill their ambitions and aim to preserve and strengthen these values in their cooperative housing project. Based on observations mainly from the French case, Eric Bidet, Maryline Filippi and Nadine Richez-Battesti's article, **"Corporate Social Responsibility and Transitions: Renewals and Challenges for the Cooperative Identity"** shows that the cooperative revival led by multi-

stakeholder cooperatives opens up new field of practices and creativity oriented towards transition. They explain that these dynamics shift the Cooperative Identity from a focus on collective interest to a contribution to the common good, questioning the low recognition of cooperatives' contribution to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and transition.

The second section, titled ***"Diversity of the Cooperative Identity"*** features four interesting articles that demonstrate the universality of Cooperative Identity by exploring various historical and philosophical traditions behind different cooperative models worldwide. In **"Decolonising the Co-operative Identity"**, T.O. Molefe highlights that frameworks for understanding the global cooperative movement have been primarily shaped by state-centric Western approaches that emerged during the age of European empire building. Molefe argues for a departure from Eurocentric thinking and calls for reparative acts to achieve a truly global cooperative identity and movement. Hyeong-Soo Jeon's work, **"On Confucian Understanding of Co-operative Thought"** offers a possible answer to the question of decolonization. By analysing the cooperative aspects found in Confucian practices, Jeon discusses whether and what cooperatives worldwide, especially in Western countries, could learn from the Confucian value system. In **"Lessons Learned from the African American Cooperative Movement"**, Jessica Gordon-Nembhard and Regine T. Adrien delve into the rich history of Black solidarity and cooperative economics within the United States. They provide roadmaps for fostering the progress made by Black Americans' cooperatives, with the aim of building a future based on solidarity, equity and inclusion. Orestes Rodríguez Musa, Yaumara Acosta Morales, Lien Soto Alemán, Deibby Valle Ríos, José Manuel Figueroa González y Orisel Hernández Aguilar present a unique context: the communist regime of Cuba. In their article, **"La Recepción de la Identidad Cooperativa en Cuba - Antecedentes, Realidad y Perspectivas** (The Reception of the Cooperative Identity in Cuba - Background, Reality and Prospects)**"**, they aim to offer a comprehensive overview of the current state and prospects for the development of Cuban cooperatives.

In the section titled ***"The Cooperative Identity and Challenges"***, various challenges faced by cooperatives are discussed, including government intervention, generational changes and market pressures. In **"The Identity Problems of the Korean Agricultural Cooperative and Its Future"**, Seong-jae Park examines the identity problems of the Korean agricultural cooperatives, analysing their causes and effects. He explains that these problems arise from the heterogeneity of members, the simultaneous management of financial and economic businesses, and their relationship with the government. Regarding government intervention, Juan Martín Asueta y Giuliana Maricel Gaiga analyse key aspects that contribute to the construction of Cooperative Identity in groups formed through a public policy programme in Argentina. Their work **"El Programa Ingreso Social con Trabajo y la construcción de Identidad Cooperativa** (The Social Income with Work Programme and the Cooperative Identity building)**"** investigates the fundamental cooperative principles that foster identity and a sense of belonging among cooperative members in their cooperatives promoted by public policy. Generational changes pose challenges to cooperative member participation models. In **"Individualization of Society and Changing Role of Japanese Consumer Co-operatives: Challenges of Cooperative Principles and Identity in Japan"**, Iruma Tanaka and Akihiro Hanzawa examine the reasons and process behind the dismantling of the "*Han*" system during the individualization of Japanese society and the changes in the retail business market. Mary Njoki Mbugua and Kennedy Munyua Waweru's article, **"Demutualization, Member Control and Financial Performance of Co-operatives in Kenya"** addresses the sensitive issue of demutualization. Drawing on two Kenyan cases, the article attempts to analyse the impact of demutualization on the relationship between member control and financial performance.

In the second volume (108/2023), the implementation of the Cooperative Identity in cooperative businesses and its institutionalization through various fields are examined. The volume consists of eleven articles grouped into three themes: entrepreneurial innovation, institutionalization and development of implementing tools.

The section titled ***"Cooperative Identity and Entrepreneurial Innovation"*** presents articles that illustrate how the Cooperative Identity contributes to the entrepreneurial innovation of cooperatives. Rosa Santero-Sánchez y Rosa Belén Castro Núñez, in their work **"Creación de Empleo de Calidad en Cooperativas y Sociedades Laborales. El Caso de España durante la Recuperación Económica 2013-2016** (Generating Quality Employment in Cooperatives and Worker Owned Firms. The Spanish Case during the Economic Recovery Period 2013-2016)**"** empirically demonstrate that cooperatives in Spain created higher-quality jobs during the recovery period after the financial crisis. Emmanuel Munyarrukumbuzi and Sidsel Grimstad, in their article **"Maintaining the Cooperative Identity in Times of COVID - Reinventing and Communicating the Cooperative Brand – the Case of Dukunde Kawa Coffee Cooperative (Musasa) in Rwanda"** present a case study of a Rwandan coffee cooperative that successfully communicated its cooperative identity through digital channels to overcome the challenges posed by the COVID lockdown. **"Vertical Integration and Member Benefits of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka"** written by Sanjaya Fernando, Elena Garnevska, Thiagarajah Ramilan and Nicola Shadbolt, examines whether smallholder farmers benefit from the vertical integration of their cooperatives. The article utilizes survey data from smallholder rice farmers in Sri Lanka to identify the business and financial, as well as technology and information benefits that fully integrated cooperatives provide to their members. Min-Jin Ji, Eunjung Lee, Hyangsuk Lee, Eunju Choi and Changsub Shin present the case of iCOOP KOREA in their article **"Entrepreneurial Innovation in a Cooperative Way: the iCOOP KOREA case."** They highlight the unique path taken by iCOOP, a Korean consumer cooperative federation, to succeed and adapt to Korea's rapidly changing business environment. The authors emphasize that the Cooperative Identity should be at the core of a cooperative's evolutionary process, as its primary goal is not profit-maximization but resource optimization. Sunhwa Kim and Seungkwon Jang, in their work **"How Does Institutional Change in Cooperatives Occur? - Fair Trade in iCOOP Consumer Cooperative"**, analyze how cooperatives introduce and expand new practices, such as Fair Trade, that may conflict with existing activities. This pre-study emphasizes the importance of various stakeholders' institutional works in driving the institutional change of cooperatives.

The Cooperative Identity extends beyond the confines of the cooperative movement and becomes institutionalized through different institutions, including statistics, public policies and education systems. The section titled ***"The Institutionalisation of the Cooperative Identity"*** features three articles that address this issue. Marie J. Bouchard, in her article **"Producing Statistics on the Social and Solidarity Economy, Challenges and Opportunities"** provides an overview of recent efforts in producing statistics

on cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy (SSE). She discusses the challenges involved in defining, measuring, mapping and policy making for statistics on cooperatives and the SSE and the importance of international comparisons. Sergio Reyes Lavega, Danilo Gutiérrez Fiori, Sergio Salazar Arguedas, Elisa Lanas Medina and Claudia Sánchez-Bajo, in **"Experiencias en Coproducción de políticas públicas e identidad cooperativa en el siglo 21** (Experiences in Public Policy Coproduction and Cooperative Identity in the 21st century)**"**, propose an analysis and comparison of the co-production processes and spaces of public policies related to cooperatives and the Cooperative Identity. Drawing on their involvement in the co-production of public policy, they present cases from Costa Rica, Uruguay, Ecuador and Mercosur. In **"Aprendizajes para la Cooperación: Experiencias Educativas en Argentina e Identidad Cooperativa** (Learning for Co-operation: Educational Experiences in Argentina and Cooperative Identity)**"**, Mirta Vuotto presents various initiatives within the Argentinean education system aimed at disseminating and deepening the Cooperative Identity.

The section titled ***"Tools for Strengthening the Cooperative Identity"*** shares interesting experiences in developing tools to implement and strengthen the Cooperative Identity. Riccardo Bodini, Michele Pasinetti, Elena Rocca and Silvia Sacchetti, in their article **"Inclusive Governance and Enterprise Sustainability: Developing New Tools for Member Participation"**, examine participatory projects within a network of Italian social cooperatives that promote the active involvement of cooperative members beyond formal governance structures and management bodies. Svenja Damberg, in **"Perceived Cooperative Member Value – The Case of German Cooperative Banks"**, proposes an approach to measure the Cooperative Identity and orientation of cooperative businesses by combining various methods applied to German cooperative banks. Silvana Avondet, Stella Cristobal, Claudia De Lisio and Cecilia Ferrario, in **"Más Valor Cooperativo: Iniciativas de Mejora Continua en el Ecosistema Cooperativo Uruguayo** (More Co-operative Value: Continuous Improvement Initiatives in the Uruguayan Co-operative Ecosystem),**"** present three tools designed to enhance cooperative management in Uruguay. They describe each tool and its contribution to the cooperative system.

We are confindent that that these articles will significantly foster and stimulate the discussion on the Cooperative Identity. On behalf of the editorial team, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the authors for their dedicated efforts and valuable collaboration. We also extend our appreciation to Ariel Guarco, President of the ICA, Martin Lowery, Chair of the 33rd World Cooperative Congress and Bruno Roelants, former Director General of the ICA , for their unwavering support and instrumental contributions in making the conference a reality. Their support has been invaluable throughout the process.

The Cooperative Identity and Entrepreneurial Innovation

L'identité coopérative et l'innovation entrepreneuriale
La Identidad Cooperativa y la Innovación Empresarial

Creación de Empleo de Calidad en Cooperativas y Sociedades Laborales. El Caso de España durante la Recuperación Económica 2013-2016[1]

Rosa Santero-Sánchez [2] y Rosa Belén Castro Núñez [3]

Generating Quality Employment in Cooperatives and Worker Owned Firms. The Spanish Case during the Economic Recovery Period 2013-2016.

Abstract

The social economy identifies itself with principles and values that prioritize people over capital. Regarding employment, literature points out a higher stability and quality of jobs, especially in periods of economic crisis. For Spain, empirical research for cooperatives show evidence that support that higher stability for the employment created.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the contribution of cooperatives and employee-owned companies to social cohesion in Spain in terms of the quality of the employment created in the recovery from the Great Recession (period 2013-2016). For that purpose, we design and estimate a composite index of job quality. Estimations obtained for social economy are compared with a control group, formed by limited liability companies and corporations, to analyze the potential differences and its significance. Results show some differences between the two groups with respect to employment quality related characteristics, although not always in favor of social economy. Globally, the composite index supports the idea of better quality in employment within cooperatives and employee-owned companies compared with jobs created at the control group, reflecting to a great extend the lower partiality observed in social economy entities.

Keywords: cooperatives, employee-owned companies, employment, job quality, composite indicator.

1 Una versión más amplia de este artículo se encuentra en Santero-Sánchez, R., & Castro Núñez, R. B. 2022. Calidad del empleo creado en las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en la recuperación económica 2013-2016. Análisis del caso de España. REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos, 142, e83723. https://doi.org/10.5209/reve.83723. Las autoras agradecen a ACI la posibilidad de publicar esta versión preliminar presentada en el congreso ICA Cooperative Research Conference & 3RD International Forum on Cooperative Law, November 28-30, 2021, SEOUL.

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Création d'emplois de qualité dans les coopératives et les sociétés de travail. Le cas de l'Espagne pendant la reprise économique 2013-2016

Résumé

L'économie sociale s'identifie par des principes et des valeurs qui donnent la priorité aux personnes plutôt qu'au capital. En termes d'emploi, ces entités offrent une meilleure qualité des postes qu'elles génèrent, surtout en période de récession. En Espagne, la littérature empirique sur les coopératives montre des preuves qui soutiennent l'idée d'une plus grande stabilité de l'emploi généré.

L'objectif principal de cet article est d'analyser la contribution des coopératives et des entreprises appartenant aux travailleurs en Espagne à la qualité de l'emploi généré pendant la reprise économique (2013-2016). À cette fin, un indicateur synthétique de la qualité du travail est proposé qui regroupe différentes variables objectives liées aux caractéristiques de l'emploi. Les résultats sont comparés à un groupe témoin formé de sociétés anonymes, afin d'étudier les différences possibles dans la qualité des nouveaux emplois. L'indicateur synthétique montre que les nouveaux emplois dans les coopératives et les entreprises appartenant aux travailleurs sont une meilleure qualité que dans le groupe témoin, résultats influencés par le pourcentage plus faible de contrats à temps partiel observé dans ces entités.

Mots-clés: coopératives, sociétés de travail, emploi, qualité du travail, indicateur synthétique.

Creación de Empleo de Calidad en Cooperativas y Sociedades Laborales. El Caso de España durante la Recuperación Económica 2013-2016

Resumen

La economía social se identifica con unos principios y valores que priorizan a las personas por encima del capital. En términos de empleo, estas entidades ofrecen una mayor calidad de los puestos de trabajo que generan, especialmente durante periodos de recesión. En España, la literatura empírica sobre cooperativas muestra evidencias que apoyan la idea de mayor estabilidad del empleo generado.

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es analizar la contribución de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en España a la calidad del empleo generado durante la recuperación económica (2013-2016). Para ello, se propone un indicador sintético de calidad laboral que agrupa diferentes variables objetivas relacionadas con las características del puesto de trabajo. Los resultados se comparan con un grupo de control formado por sociedades anónimas y limitadas, para estudiar las posibles diferencias en la calidad del nuevo empleo y la significatividad de las mismas. De forma global, el indicador sintético muestra que los nuevos puestos de trabajo en cooperativas y sociedades laborales tienen mayor calidad que en el grupo de control, resultados influidos por el menor porcentaje de contratos a tiempo parcial observado en estas entidades.

Palabras clave: cooperativas, sociedades laborales, empleo, calidad laboral, indicador sintético.

1. Introduction

A partir de la crisis internacional de 2008, el mercado laboral ha experimentado un importante freno, tanto por aumentar las tasas de desempleo, como reducir las de actividad y acompañar a estos efectos, una disminución de la calidad del empleo (Jansen, Jiménez-Martín, and Gorjón, 2016 ; OCDE, 2016). España no fue ajena a esta situación y la elevada tasa de paro puso de manifiesto una mayor competencia por los puestos de trabajo existentes, asociados además a unas peores condiciones laborales, con mayor temporalidad y parcialidad, así como con menores retribuciones en los nuevos empleos generados (Jansen, Jiménez-Martín, and Gorjón, 2016). Una de las características específicas del mercado laboral español es su alta temporalidad, que se ha reducido ligeramente en el periodo de crisis hasta alcanzar el 25%, debido a que los ajustes en empleo se han realizado con este tipo de contratos (Santero, Castro, and Martín, 2018). Los nuevos empleos creados en el periodo posterior a la crisis han venido acompañados de un empeoramiento de la precariedad, con un uso extendido de contratos de muy corta duración (Felgueroso, García-Pérez, and Jansen, 2018) y menores remuneraciones, con las consecuencias asociadas para la retribución presente y futura de las personas y las dificultades para desarrollar una carrera profesional.

Los efectos de la Gran Recesión muestran un punto de inflexión en el año 2013. La tasa de ocupación se redujo durante el periodo más fuerte de la crisis hasta alcanzar su mínimo en ese año, con un 44,4%, y la tasa de desempleo creció de forma continuada hasta situarse en el 26,1% (Gráfico 1). A partir del 2013, las tendencias se invierten hasta el año 2019 que parece comenzar un cambio de tendencia.

En este marco, la economía social se erige en un instrumento transformador para alcanzar empleos de calidad. La Ley 5/2011 de Economía Social identifica entre sus principios diferenciales, la valorización del ser humano y la generación de valor social por encima de los resultados económicos o financieros, y define al sector como el "conjunto de actividades económicas y empresariales, que en el ámbito privado llevan a cabo aquellas entidades que (…) persiguen bien el interés colectivo de sus integrantes, bien el interés general económico o social, o ambos (…). Estas entidades se rigen por algunos principios orientadores entre los que cabe destacar la primacía de las personas y del fin social sobre el capital; la aplicación de los resultados obtenidos de la actividad económica; la promoción de la solidaridad interna y con la sociedad (…) y la generación

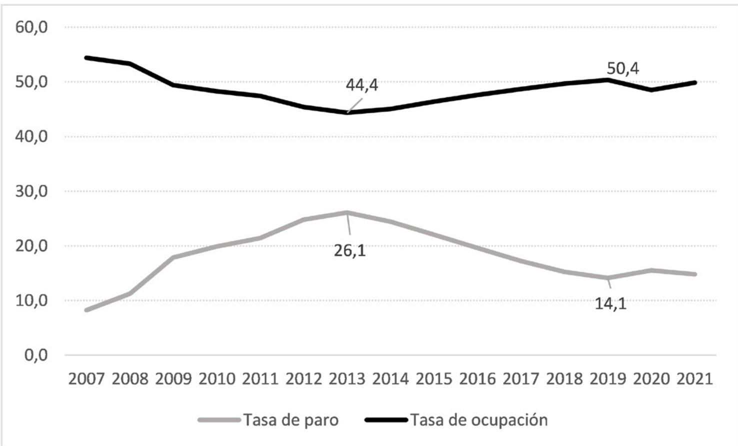

Gráfico 1. Tasa de ocupación y tasa de paro. Periodo 2007-2021.

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de datos de Encuesta de Población Activa (Instituto Nacional de Estadística)

de empleo estable y de calidad (…)".

Estos principios conllevan un comportamiento específico en términos del empleo, que se concreta en plantillas más diversas e integradoras y en mejores condiciones laborales (Calderón and Calderón, 2012 ; Santero and Castro, 2016), con una mayor estabilidad en el empleo (Castro Núñez et al., 2013), y mayor resiliencia en tiempos de crisis (Monzón Campos and Chaves Ávila, 2012 ; Monzón and Chaves, 2017 ; Borzaga, Salvatori, and Bodini, 2019). En este sentido, en la última crisis de la COVID-19 en España, las cooperativas han sido las que mejor han resistido, tanto en número de empresas como en empleo, incluso han crecido en algunos sectores como sanidad y servicios sociales o el sector educativo (Cancelo, Vázquez, and Díaz-Vázquez, 2022 ; Juliá Igual, Bernal Jurado, and Carrasco Monteagudo, 2022).

La literatura que analiza el comportamiento de las cooperativas en los ciclos económicos argumenta que su mayor estabilidad laboral se combina con un mayor ajuste vía salarial frente al empleo (Albanese, Navarra, and Tortia, 2019 ; Kurtulus and Kruse, 2018). Las posibles diferencias observadas en la retribución en empresas de economía social en relación con empresas capitalistas incluyen múltiples aspectos (Bailly, Chapelle, and Prouteau, 2017). En términos generales, existe un argumento motivacional por el que los trabajadores en el ámbito de la economía social comparten como principio, una vocación por lo social, la primacía de las personas sobre el capital y ciertas limitaciones en términos del reparto de los beneficios. Asimismo, se observa un compromiso con la estabilidad laboral y otros beneficios no salariales en términos de calidad del puesto laboral (Bonatti and Lorenzetti, 2018). Estos aspectos pueden explicar la existencia de salarios más bajos en las entidades de la economía social, incluidas las cooperativas (Becchetti, Castriota, and Tortia, 2013). Por último, un aspecto específico que resulta interesante es el efecto a lo largo de la escala salarial. La revisión de literatura parece indicar que las diferencias globales se deben en mayor medida a la situación en los rangos superiores de salario, vinculados a mayor cualificación (Bartlett et al., 1992 ; Burdín and Dean, 2009).

En el caso de España, la evidencia empírica constata la estabilidad laboral como una de las señas de identidad de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales (Grávalos and Pomares, 2001 ; Arando et al., 2010 ; Díaz and Marcuello, 2010 ; Garcia-Louzao, 2021 ; Cancelo, Vázquez, and Díaz-Vázquez, 2022). En términos de salarios, la economía social muestra menores salarios que sus equivalentes mercantiles (Castro et al., 2020). De hecho, Garcia-Louzao (2021) analiza la evolución del empleo y salarios en las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en España a lo largo del periodo 2005-2016 en comparación con empresas capitalistas y muestra una mayor estabilidad en el empleo, un nivel salarial inferior al existente en el grupo de control y similar volatilidad. El autor indica como posible razón la existencia de legislación y convenios que limitan la capacidad de responder a los ciclos económicos con ajustes salariales.

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es analizar la contribución de la economía social en España, en particular de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales, en términos de calidad del empleo generado por parte de las entidades que la forman. En particular, analizamos el periodo de recuperación económica tras la Gran Recesión que comenzó en el año 2008. A tales efectos analizamos el nuevo empleo creado por las mismas en el periodo 2013 a 2016. Para tener un valor de referencia, se construye un grupo de control, con el empleo generado por sociedades anónimas y de responsabilidad limitada, estratificando el grupo por tamaño de empresa y sector económico.

La hipótesis de trabajo que se desea contrastar es si la calidad laboral de los nuevos puestos de trabajo generados durante el periodo analizado es mayor en las cooperativas y sociedades laborales. Para ello, se utilizará un índice sintético de calidad laboral (ISCL) construido a partir de diferentes características objetivas del puesto laboral (vinculadas a la estabilidad, tipo de jornada y salarios).

De esta forma, se avanza en la medición de la calidad laboral, combinando el análisis de indicadores clave, con el diseño y cálculo de un indicador sintético de calidad laboral. Más aún, la comparativa de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales con un grupo de control formado por empresas tradicionalmente mercantiles, complementa la construcción del indicador que permiten derivar conclusiones robustas. El cálculo a nivel trabajador/a, permite analizar en mayor profundidad las posibles diferencias entre entidades de la economía social y empresas puramente mercantiles, algo clave en la visibilización de la contribución de las cooperativas a la sociedad.

2. La medición de la calidad laboral

Para analizar la calidad del empleo debemos abordar dos cuestiones fundamentales. En primer lugar, su conceptualización teórica y, en segundo, su operativización y aproximación empírica.

La primera limitación conceptual sobre la calidad laboral es la carencia de una única definición aceptada en el ámbito internacional. Esto se debe al carácter complejo y multidimensional del término, que combina tanto aspectos objetivos como subjetivos (Muñoz de Bustillo et al., 2011). El origen del análisis de la calidad laboral se remonta al estudio de la calidad ligada a la satisfacción de los trabajadores en sus puestos laborales (Burchell et al., 2014). Las críticas relativas a la subjetividad de este concepto llevaron a la inclusión de otras variables, cuya medición reviste mayor objetividad.

Desde un punto de vista holístico, la calidad del trabajo abarca características del empleo y del puesto laboral (horas de trabajo, sueldo, cualificación necesaria…), del entorno empresarial y del mercado de trabajo, así como la valoración subjetiva del trabajador relativa a su puesto (Somarriba, Merino, and Negro, 2013). De esta definición, estos autores derivan un indicador sintético que considera cuatro tipos de dimensiones: “seguridad socioeconómica”, que incluye variables relativas a la estabilidad y calidad del puesto de trabajo (temporalidad, rotación, coste salarial por trabajador, porcentaje de contratos a tiempo parcial, satisfacción con salario, jornada e involuntariedad del trabajo a tiempo parcial); aspectos asociados a la percepción del trabajador con su puesto laboral (satisfacción con entorno físico, salud y seguridad, autonomía, adecuación a su formación, predicción y prevención riegos laborales, percepción de estrés, monotonía y riegos en el trabajo, compañerismo, trabajo en equipo, satisfacción con tiempo de descanso y participación en cursos de formación); variables relativas a las relaciones laborales (convenio, organigrama, estructura que facilita la negociación colectiva, conocimiento de los objetivos de la empresa, participación en la toma de decisiones); y, características de políticas sociales (tasa de paro en grupos desfavorecidos, conciliación de vida familiar y laboral, cobertura de desempleo).

La Comisión Europea (2009) propone en sus Indicadores de Calidad en el Trabajo, dos dimensiones: calidad del empleo, que incluye aspectos del empleo con impacto sobre el bienestar del trabajador (tipo de contrato, remuneración, jornada laboral, posibilidades de promoción y evolución profesional, etc.); y calidad del trabajo, centrada en las formas en las que la actividad laboral se desarrolla (autonomía, intensidad, entorno laboral, etc.).

En resumen, las definiciones incluyen varias dimensiones, y existe coincidencia en la dimensión objetiva “seguridad socioeconómica”, referida a las características del puesto laboral que recoge información registral, variables ligadas al contrato y comparables entre diferentes sujetos, países, empresas y sectores. Así pues, este trabajo se centra en esta dimensión.

Una vez elegida la dimensión para aproximar la calidad laboral, hay que decidir los aspectos (variables) a incluir: salario y otras retribuciones, tipo de jornada laboral, duración del contrato, aspectos relacionados con la conciliación o con la formación y cualificación, etc. (una revisión sistemática de esta literatura se encuentra en Stefana et al., 2021). Los indicadores estadísticos asociados a las áreas incluidas en el indicador de calidad vienen determinados por la disponibilidad dentro de las fuentes de información utilizadas en cada propuesta. En este trabajo, en el apartado de metodología, identificamos las variables disponibles para el caso de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en España.

3. Metodología para la elaboración de indicadores sintéticos de calidad laboral

3.1 Metodología para la construcción de un indicador sintético de calidad laboral

La multidimensionalidad asociada al concepto de calidad laboral implica en la práctica el uso de técnicas estadísticas de análisis multidimensional, para poder aunar la información aportada por diferentes variables. Una de las técnicas más utilizadas es la estimación de indicadores sintéticos, que permiten analizar la influencia de indicadores parciales sobre la medida conjunta estimada. La Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo (OCDE) define un indicador sintético como el que “mide conceptos multidimensionales que no pueden ser capturados por un indicador individual” (JRC-EU, 2008:13). Así pues, técnicamente, un indicador sintético es una combinación matemática de indicadores individuales, cada uno de los cuales refleja un aspecto particular del fenómeno multidisciplinar que desea analizarse. Siguiendo el manual elaborado por la OCDE (JRC-EU, 2008) y las recomendaciones de expertos en la construcción de indicadores sintéticos (Nardo and Saisana, 2009; Nardo, et al., 2005), es útil ir tomando decisiones metodológicas por etapas (Figura 1). En primer lugar, se establece un marco teórico que define los criterios para la inclusión de las variables individuales en el indicador sintético. En segundo lugar, seleccionar las variables a incluir y preparalas estadísticamente (imputación de datos perdidos, transformación en indicadores, análisis de correlación y multivariante, normalización para eliminar las diferencias en unidades de medida, etc.). En tercer lugar, se selecciona y diseña el procedimiento estadístico de asignación de ponderaciones a cada indicador individual, para en un paso posterior, realizar la agregación y obtención del indicador sintético. Por último, se debe desarrollar y aplicar un proceso de validación, que incluya análisis de robustez y sensibilidad.

Figura 1. Fases de construcción de un indicador sintético.

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de JRC-EU (2008)

Con respecto a la primera etapa, el marco teórico desarrollado (Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015; Muñoz de Bustillo et al., 2011; Stefana et al., 2021) determina la seguridad socioeconómica como dimensión para aproximar la calidad laboral, y en la segunda etapa, se incluyen los indicadores individuales, cuya selección final también está determinada por la disponibilidad de información estadística (desarrollado en los apartados 3.2 y 3.3).

En la tercera fase, para la asignación de ponderaciones a cada variable, la literatura ofrece diferentes opciones metodológicas y no existe consenso sobre la idoneidad de un proceso específico (JRC-EU, 2008). Es habitual que se construyan indicadores sintéticos utilizando proyecciones lineales unidimensionales que generan medias ponderadas de indicadores simples, por con ponderaciones idénticas para cada variable (Arranz, García-Serrano, and Hernanz, 2018). Para utilizar este procedimiento es necesario que las variables que van a formar parte del indicador sintético tengan las mismas unidades de medida y no estén relacionadas entre ellas. Cuando no se cumplen estas condiciones, se pueden utilizar diferentes técnicas de análisis multivariante, como el Análisis de Componentes Principales (ACP) o el análisis factorial (Nicoletti and Scarpetta, 2003). Para la aplicación de ACP es necesario que las variables originales sean cuantitativas, se estandaricen para eliminar problemas de medida, y que exista cierto grado de correlación entre las mismas. Para la construcción de nuestro indicador de calidad, hemos elegido esta técnica estadística, que está especialmente indicada cuando no existe un consenso sobre la importancia relativa de las variables originales dentro del indicador sintético.

En la cuarta fase, se decide el tipo de agregación entre los indicadores individuales. El método de agregación lineal es útil cuando todos los indicadores individuales tienen la misma unidad de medida (Nardo et al., 2005), mientras que las agregaciones geométricas son apropiadas cuando los indicadores individuales no son comparables y se expresan en diferentes escalas de razón. Puesto que las variables a incluir en nuestro caso van a expresarse todas en términos continuos de medida de 0 a 100, que se pueden interpretar como porcentajes, se van a agregar de forma lineal (ecuación en Anexo).

La última fase compara varios indicadores propuestos con diferentes ponderaciones y agregaciones sobre las variables incluidas, y se presenta en el apartado de conclusiones.

3.2 Base de datos y variables

En este trabajo se utiliza la Muestra Continua de Vidas Laborales (MCVL) (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2018), un conjunto organizado de microdatos anónimos extraídos de registros administrativos y correspondiente a más de 1,2 millones de personas residentes en España. Constituye una muestra representativa de todas las personas que han tenido relación con la Seguridad Social en un determinado año. Contiene variables sociológicas básicas (edad, domicilio, nacionalidad, etc.), información relativa a toda la vida laboral de las personas, siempre que se haya desarrollado dentro de España (tipo de contrato, duración del mismo, grupo de cotización, etc.), y algunas variables relativas a características básicas del empleador. Dichas variables permiten la identificación de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales cuyos trabajadores están recogidos en la MCVL.

De cara a analizar la calidad del empleo generado en las cooperativas y sociedades laborales a lo largo de la recuperación económica se analizará el empleo creado a lo largo de los años 2013-2016, utilizando las MCVL publicadas en 2014, 2015, 2016 y 2017. En estas se indentificará para cada uno de los años a las personas que se han incorporado al mercado laboral. Como grupo de control se utiliza una muestra de empresas (y sus trabajadores/as) sociedades anónimas y limitadas, equivalente en términos de tamaño de empresa y sector económico. A tales efectos, se obtiene un perfil de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en cuanto a su sector de actividad y tamaño que se reproduce a la hora de definir el grupo de control, igualándose las distribuciones cruzadas por tamaño empresarial, y sector de actividad de ambas muestras. La muestra final con la que se ha trabajado incluye el empleo generado en el periodo 2013-16 vinculado a 4.162 cooperativas (14.769 trabajadores) y un grupo de control formado por 13.602 empresas SA y SL (50.929 trabajadores/as) estratificadas por tamaño y sector económico según lo anteriormente citado. La edad media en ambos grupos es similar, en torno a los 40 años, mientras que el porcentaje de mujeres es ligeramente superior en las cooperativas y sociedades laborales (49,1% frente a 47,4%).

La MCVL incluye diversas variables relacionadas con el puesto de trabajo, de las cuales, las siguientes se encuentran dentro de las que el marco teórico asocia a la dimensión de seguridad socioeconómica de la calidad laboral:

1. Tipo de contrato: La variable de partida es la modalidad contractual de la relación laboral, agregada en contratos indefinidos y temporales. Al tratarse de una variable categórica, no se puede incorporar como variable explicativa en el análisis de componentes principales para la construcción del indicador sintético, que exige que sean continuas. Por ello, se ha construido la siguiente variable: Porcentaje de contratos indefinidos sobre el total de relaciones laborales, donde 100% recoge la situación donde todos los contratos de las relaciones laborales de una persona han sido indefinidos. Por tanto, cuanto mayor sea esta variable, mayor estabilidad tendrá el trabajador desde esta perspectiva.

2. Tipo de jornada: La muestra incluye una variable continua donde el valor 100 está asociado a la jornada completa y los valores inferiores a 100 proporcionan diferentes porcentajes de trabajo a tiempo parcial. Esta variable se transforma para calcular el porcentaje de días trabajados a jornada completa sobre el total de días trabajados en el periodo. El máximo es

100% que significa que todos sus días se han trabajado a jornada completa. En el caso de España, la temporalidad se considera negativa, en cuanto a la calidad laboral, por las condiciones asociadas que conlleva: inseguridad, jornadas laborales variables, menores salarios, frecuencias imprevisibles que pueden dificultar la conciliación de la vida laboral y personal (Prieto, Arnal, and Potroni, 2011). En consecuencia, si esta variable se aproxima al máximo valor, estaríamos asociando el trabajo con jornadas completas en todas sus relaciones laborales, y, por tanto, mayor calidad laboral.

3. Salario: A partir del salario percibido por los trabajadores durante el periodo analizado en la empresa principal en la que han desarrollado su actividad, se calcula el salario medio diario equivalente a jornada completa y para cuantificarlo en forma de índice, con valores de 0 a 100, al igual que el resto de variables, se transforma siguiendo el cálculo del Índice de Desarrollo Humano, también utilizado en otros cálculos de indicadores sintéticos (Arranz, García-Serrano, and Hernanz, 2018). La fórmula para su cálculo sería: (valor-mínimo)/(máximo-mínimo). A partir de la retribución se asocia un mayor salario con una mejora de la calidad del puesto laboral.

4. Duración acumulada de las relaciones laborales durante el periodo: La variable mide el número de días totales trabajados. El periodo analizado es 2013-2016, siendo la fecha de extracción correspondiente a los datos de 2016, mayo de 2017. Así pues, el máximo número de días es de 1.612 días. En este sentido el cálculo de los días trabajados se ha realizado de forma neta, contando como día trabajado aquel en el que se tengan uno o varios trabajos, evitando problemas derivados de la superposición de relaciones laborales. En términos de días trabajados, a los trabajadores les favorece tener continuidad en el trabajo y, por tanto, una mayor duración en el año mejoraría su calidad laboral. La variable se ha transformado de forma análoga a lo explicado en el indicador de salarios para obtener un índice con valores de 0 a 100.

Al tratarse de un análisis multianual, siempre existirá un sesgo a la baja en la valoración de las últimas relaciones laborales comenzadas en 2016, y que en el momento de la fecha de extracción (mayo 2017) continúen activas, pero cuya duración es corta al haberse iniciado al final del periodo analizado. Cabe resaltar que esta situación se dará tanto en el grupo objeto de análisis como en el grupo de control y, por tanto, al estar comparando ambos grupos, los resultados mostrarán las diferencias entre ambos grupos, independientemente de esta situación.

4. Resultados

Los nuevos contratos firmados en el periodo 2013 a 2016 muestran una relativa inestabilidad en ambos grupos analizados. Las personas que han trabajado en cooperativas y sociedades laborales han tenido en media 3 episodios laborales, uno más que en el caso del grupo de control. En general, la mayoría de las personas han tenido de una a tres relaciones laborales a lo largo de los 4 años analizados, aunque ese porcentaje es mayor en el caso del grupo de control (gráfico 2). Esto está vinculado a su vez a la prevalencia generalizada de contratos temporales en España, una de las razones que ha llevado a la reciente reforma laboral de 2022, donde se restringe el uso de dichos contratos (Real Decreto-Ley 32/2021 de 28 de diciembre, de medidas urgentes para la reforma laboral).

En particular, en la muestra analizada, sólo el 18,7% de los trabajadores/as que comenzaron una relación laboral con cooperativas y sociedades laborales lo hicieron con un contrato indefinido, frente al 24,4% enl caso del grupo de control. Sin

embargo, esto no se traduce en grandes diferencias en la duración de las relaciones laborales. Por término medio, los días trabajados acumulados (netos de días de trabajo superpuesto en más de una relación laboral) por un trabajador/a en una cooperativa/sociedad laboral fueron 11,6 meses (349 días), en comparación con los 12,3 meses en el grupo de control (368 días). En particular, con independencia de la entidad empleadora, existe un importante número de personas cuyos contratos no superan los 6 meses, un 50% en el caso de cooperativas/sociedades laborales y un 46% en el grupo de control (gráfico 3).

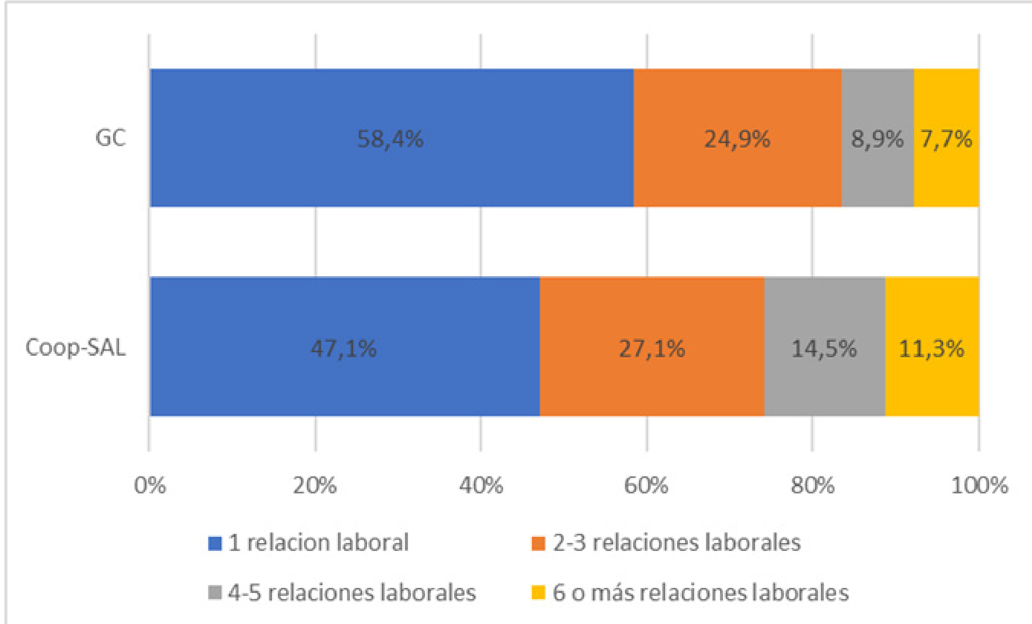

Gráfico 2. Número de relaciones laborales totales en el periodo 2013-2016 por persona

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de las MCVL para diversos años.

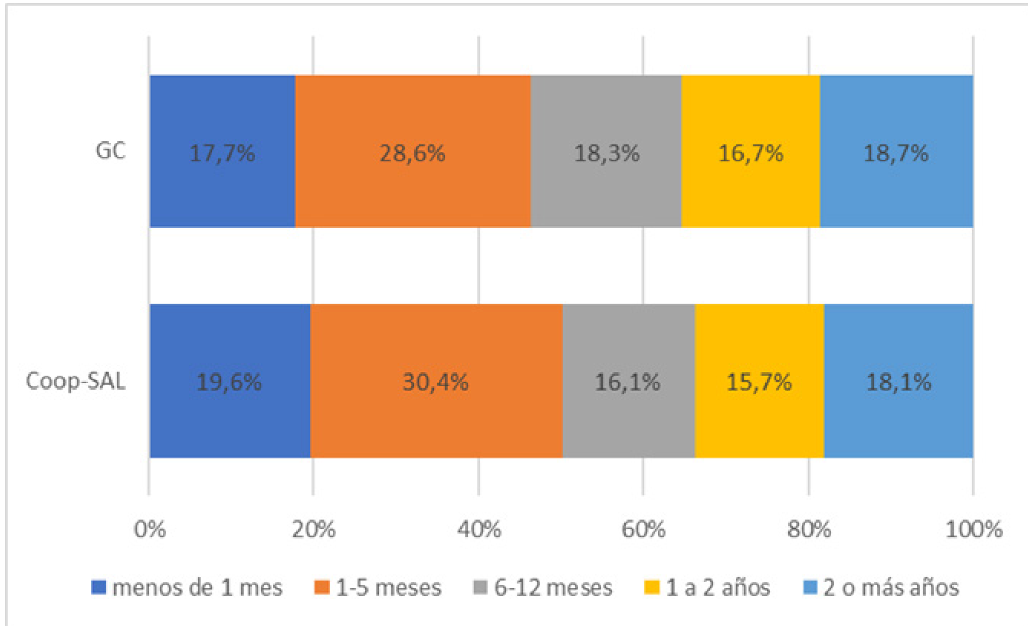

Gráfico 3. Número de días de trabajo acumulados por persona en el periodo 2013-2016

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de las MCVL para diversos años.

Una perspectiva complementaria a la calidad del puesto laboral es la centrada en la parcialidad. Esto es de especial relevancia en el caso de España, ya que en el periodo 2013-2016 el porcentaje de personas que trabajaban a tiempo parcial pero que desearían hacerlo a tiempo completo superaba el 60% (Banco de España, 2017). Tres de cada cuatro personas que comenzaron a trabajar en cooperativas o sociedades laborales, mantuvieron siempre una jornada completa (gráfico 4), mientras que, en el caso del grupo de control, el porcentaje baja hasta un 66,5% (dos de cada tres personas).

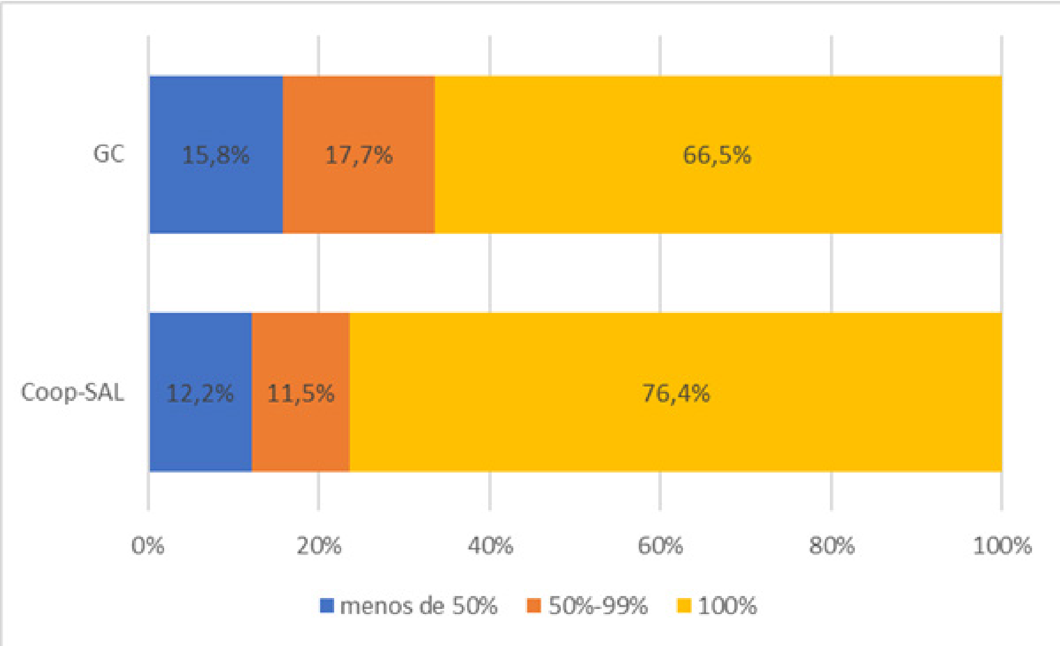

Gráfico 4. Porcentaje de días trabajados a jornada completa por persona en el periodo 2013-2016

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de las MCVL para diversos años

El contexto descrito en términos de días trabajados y parcialidad se refleja en los salarios (Tabla 1). En términos de salario diario medio, los valores son similares en los dos grupos analizados (75,1 y 76 €/día), pero dada la dispersión existente en la muestra en su conjunto, es interesante también analizar los valores medianos (aquellos que muestran lo que pasa en el medio de la escala salarial). En ese caso, el salario mediano diario es prácticamente el mismo en ambos grupos (36 €/día), mientras que, si eliminamos el efecto de la parcialidad, y nos centramos en salarios a jornada completa equivalente, las empresas tradicionalmente mercantiles del grupo de control muestran salarios algo superiores, 42,4 €/día frente a 40,1€/día en cooperativas y sociedades laborales.

Tabla 1. Salario diario equivalente a jornada completa en el periodo 2013-2016. Cooperativas y Sociedades Laborales y Grupo de control, euros por día.

	Salario diario medio a jornada completa equivalente		Salario diario medio	
	Coop/SAL	GC	Coop/SAL	GC
Media	97,5	93,8	75,1	76
Mediana	40,1	42,4	36,2	36
Desviación típica	1141,4	962,5	1048	856,4

La literatura reconoce que la economía social en general retribuye a sus trabajadores con salarios inferiores al resto de la economía, y ofrece una menor dispersión en el rango salarial, que se asocia con retribuciones más equitativas entre el rango ocupacional (Castro et al., 2020). En los gráficos 5 y 6 se ahonda en la dispersión del salario diario, constatándose la influencia de la parcialidad en la distribución salarial. El gráfico 5 muestra la distribución de los salarios diarios, donde la línea continua, que representa a trabajadores/as de cooperativas y sociedades laborales muestra una mayor concentración en torno al salario medio (36€), mientras que, en el caso del grupo de control, hay un porcentaje algo mayor de personas por debajo y por encima de la media, así como en la parte final, donde se acumulan las personas que cobran más de 300€/día. La influencia de la parcialidad se constata si se compara esta distribución con la resultante para el salario medio diario equivalente a jornada completa recogida en el gráfico 6. La distribución es muy similar, si bien se observa un desplazamiento hacia salarios medios más altos (a la derecha) en las empresas del grupo de control.

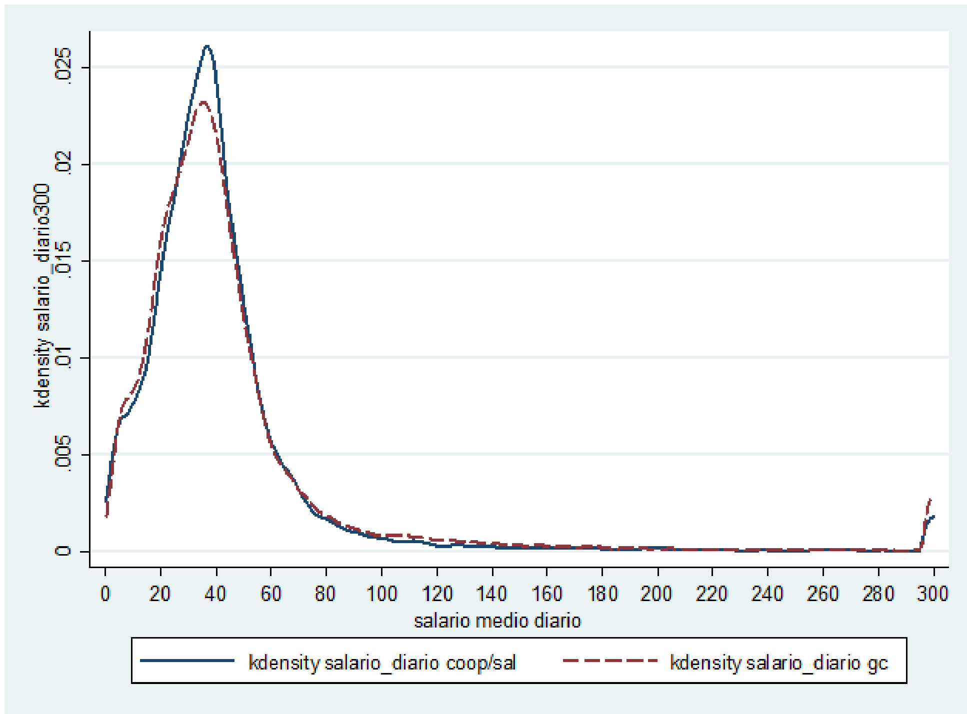

Gráfico 5. Distribución del salario medio diario (€ por día)

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de las MCVL para diversos años.

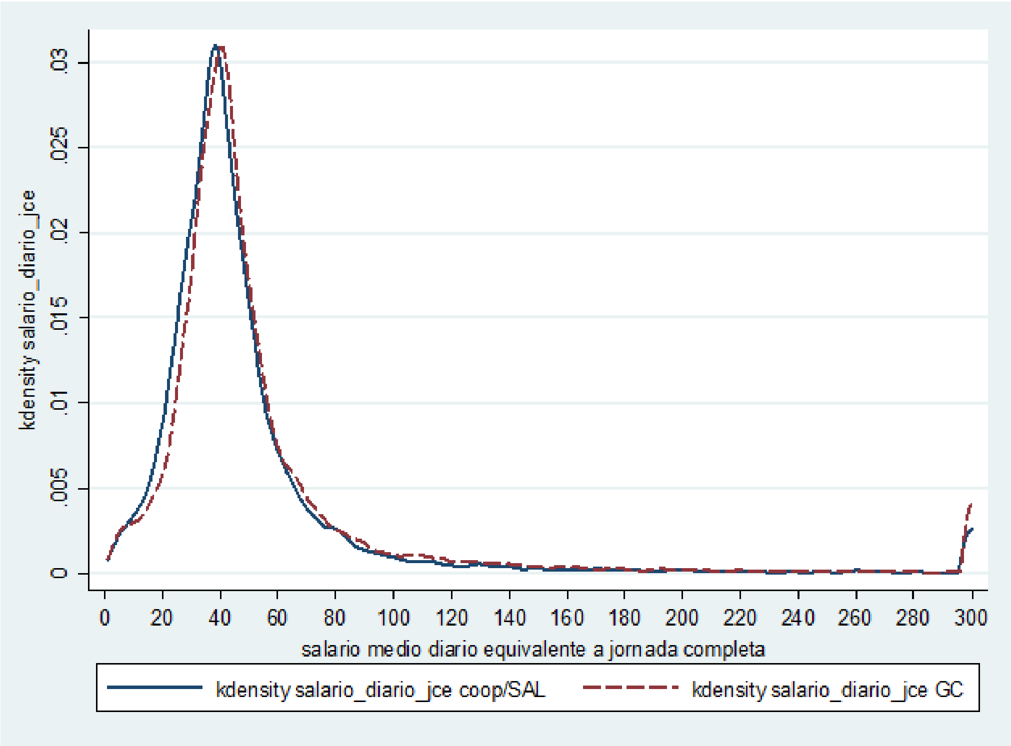

Gráfico 6. Distribución del salario medio diario a jornada completa (€ por día)

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de las MCVL para diversos años

De cara a obtener una medida combinada de los diferentes aspectos mencionados, se calcula un indicador sintético de calidad laboral (ISCL). Para ello, según se explica en la metodología y se detalla en el anexo, a través de un análisis de componentes principales, se construye el ISCL, asignando un peso a cada indicador parcial. La ecuación del indicador sintético queda de la siguiente forma:

ISCL_ACP=0,079*INDEF+0,49*JC+0,079*SAL+0,351*DUR [1]

Este resultado muestra que las variables que tienen mayor peso en la calidad serían el porcentaje de contratos a jornada completa que tienen sobre el total de las relaciones laborales (JC), seguido de la duración acumulada total durante el periodo (DUR). El indicador de salarios (SAL), así como la estabilidad medida por el porcentaje de contratos indefinidos sobre el total de relaciones laborales (INDEF) tienen peso similar y residual respecto al indicador sintético.

Para realizar un análisis de robustez de los resultados obtenidos, estos se pueden comparar con los obtenidos a partir de una estructura diferente de pesos de las variables, u otras formas de agregación (geométrica, armónica), además de comparar el indicador de referencia introduciendo o eliminando variables (Saisana, Saltelli, and Tarantola, 2005).

Para hacer una primera comparativa con nuestra propuesta, se define un indicador alternativo base donde se da el mismo peso a todas las variables, de la siguiente forma:

ISCL_eq=0,25*INDEF+0,25*JC+0,25*SAL+0,25*DUR [2]

En ambos casos, se contrastan las diferencias en medias entre los trabajadores/as de cooperativas y sociedades laborales, frente a los obtenidos para sociedades anónimas y limitadas del grupo de control. Los resultados se presentan en la Tabla 2. Los dos indicadores propuestos se mueven en una escala de 0 a 100, siento este último valor el de mayor calidad, que indicaría que el 100% de los contratos de la persona han sido indefinidos, a jornada completa, con el salario máximo y con una duración de los contratos que abarca todo el periodo analizado. Evidentemente, esto solo podría ocurrir si todas las personas hubieran comenzado a trabajar el 1 de enero de 2013, aspecto que no se cumple, puesto que se tienen en cuenta todas las personas que han empezado a trabajar en el periodo 2013-16. Esta es una limitación que se deberá tener en cuenta a futuro para poder relativizar el indicador en función de la fecha de inicio en los nuevos contratos. Teniendo en cuenta el valor medio de los indicadores propuestos, se observa que los pesos aplicados a las variables utilizando la técnica de ACP, recogen mayores valores, asignando en general, una calidad superior al empleo. En el caso del indicador alternativo, hay menos diferencias en los valores medios y son inferiores al de pesos por ACP.

En relación a la comparativa entre las empresas de economía social y el grupo de control, las diferencias entre ambos grupos son reducidas, y favorecen a las cooperativas y sociedades laborales solo en el indicador calculado por ACP (Tabla 2). Sin embargo, hay que tener en cuenta que en el caso de compararlo con los pesos iguales (ISCL_eq), aunque la calidad media es ligeramente superior para el grupo de control, el contraste de hipótesis revela que no hay diferencias estadísticamente significativas. Por tanto, utilizando el indicador sintético de calidad ACP, la hipótesis de investigación se confirma, y se puede decir que la calidad laboral en cooperativas y sociedades laborales es superior a la de las empresas del grupo de control (52,84 frente a 51,87), siendo estadísticamente significativas las diferencias entre ambos tipos de empresas.

Tabla 2. Valores medios de los indicadores sintéticos de calidad laboral. Cooperativas y Sociedades Laborales y Grupo de control.

	Tipo de empresa	Media	Diferencia	Estadístico Kruskal-Wallis (Sign).
ISCL_ACP	Coop/SAL	52,84	0,97	20,497 (0,000)
	GC	51,87		
ISCL_eq	Coop/SAL	33,46	-0,72	0,001 (0,982)
	GC	34,18		

Fuente: Elaboración propia

5. Conclusiones

La calidad del empleo es un aspecto socioeconomico cada vez más presente en el debate existente en las sociedades, especialmente tras las crisis acaecidas en 2008 y 2020 y el deterioro de las condiciones laborales a nivel mundial, incluyendo el caso de España (García-Pérez, Prieto-Alaiz, and Simón, 2020 ; Garcia-Louzao, 2021). La revisión de literatura apunta a que las empresas de economía social, como cooperativas y sociedades laborales, tienen un mejor comportamiento respecto a la estabilidad del empleo y su calidad durante los periodos de crisis (Monzón Campos and Chaves Ávila, 2012 ; Monzón and Chaves, 2017 ; Juliá Igual, Bernal Jurado, and Carrasco Monteagudo, 2022). Pero resulta de gran importancia distinguir entre el empleo existente y el de nueva creación, para ahondar en la evolución en términos de la disminución de la calidad del empleo que se está generando.

En este sentido, el trabajo presentado aporta evidencia sobre las condiciones laborales de las personas que se han incorporado al mercado laboral a través de cooperativas y sociedades laborales tras la Gran Recesión, en particular para el periodo 2013-2016. Existen diferentes aproximaciones al concepto de calidad laboral, y este trabajo se centra en la perspectiva de seguridad socioeconómica, con un indicador sintético que incluye cuatro factores objetivos relacionados con el nuevo puesto laboral generado. El peso de los factores dentro del indicador sintético ha sido determinado a partir de técnicas estadísticas multivariantes que tienen en cuenta las posibles correlaciones entre las variables. El resultado ha sido un mayor peso en el tipo de jornada y el tiempo real trabajado, por encima de la duración formal del contrato (tipo de contrato) o la retribución asociada al mismo.

El indicador sintético de calidad propuesto presenta valores medios superiores en el grupo de economía social que en el grupo de control, en parte reflejando el menor peso de los contratos a tiempo parcial que se observa en la economía social. La evidencia que se extrae de nuestro análisis está en línea con otras investigaciones, tanto a nivel nacional como internacional, que muestran que las entidades de economía social tienen un papel fundamental como organizaciones empresariales que ofrecen empleos de mejor calidad (Garcia-Louzao, 2021 ; Álvarez, Bouchard, and Marcuello, 2022 ; Juliá Igual, Bernal Jurado, and Carrasco Monteagudo, 2022). De hecho, este papel ha sido reconocido por la Unión Europea, con el lanzamiento del Plan de Acción para la Economía Social (Comisión Europea, 2021), aprobado en diciembre del 2021. Igualmente, la Organización Internacional del Trabajo aprobó durante su 110º asamblea general, en junio de 2022, una resolución relativa al trabajo decente y la economía social, reconociendo de forma explícita la contribución de la economía social a la mejora de la calidad del trabajo (OIT, 2022).

El reconocimiento del papel de la economía social también se observa en España, que a lo largo de la última década ha desarollado políticas específicas centradas en la economía social. La Estrategia Española de la Economía Social 2017-2020, que junto con la financiación de un Programa Operativo del Fondo Social Europeo 2014-2020, ha fortalecido el apoyo en el acceso al mercado laboral de grupos con mayor riesgo de exclusión laboral y del emprendimiento social para facilitar el acceso al empleo. Este Programa Operativo se complementó con programas operativos y estrategias regionales y locales, donde a su vez se han utilizado recursos europeos y nacionales (OCDE, 2020). En la actualidad el Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social está concluyendo el diseño de la nueva Estrategia Española de Economía Social hasta el 2027, que se sumará a los objetivos y lineas de actuación incluidas en el Plan Estratégico para la Recuperación y Transformación Económica (PERTE) para la economía social y de los cuidados, cuyo objetivo es potenciar y consolidar las alianzas entre todas la organizaciones que trabajan en la economía social en España.

El creciente interés por la contribución de la economía social al empleo decente, refuerza la necesidad de profundizar en el comportamiento de cooperativas y sociedades laborales en relación al nuevo empleo generado así como el existente, en respuesta a un ciclo económico completo que incluya el periodo pre-covid y post-covid. Viendo las diferentes respuestas que cooperativas y sociedades laborales han tenido en el periodo post-covid (Juliá Igual, Bernal Jurado, and Carrasco Monteagudo, 2022), los análisis de estos tipos de entidades deberían diferenciarse, puesto que son las cooperativas las que se han mantenido e incluso crecido durante este periodo. Más aún, en el caso de España, la aplicación de la reforma laboral de 2022 (Real Decreto Ley 32/2021 de 28 de diciembre) ha afectado directamente al tipo de contratos, y se espera tenga un efecto final sobre la temporalidad. Así pues, el estudio del efecto de esta reforma sobre la calidad de los nuevos contratos aún requiere el paso del tiempo, pero no cabe duda que resultará de gran interés.

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Anexo

Para asignar las ponderaciones a cada dimensión del indicador sintético (3ª fase) se parte del cálculo de los componentes principales, sus autovalores y la varianza explicada por cada componente. El ISCL se construiría a partir de la suma ponderada de los valores de los "p" componentes, donde la ponderación (wi) sería el porcentaje de varianza explicada por cada componente principal (CPi):

$$ISCL = \sum_{i=1}^{p} w_i CP_i \qquad [A1]$$

Sin embargo, resulta más útil obtener el valor del indicador directamente a partir de las "k" variables originales tipificadas de la siguiente forma[4] :

$$ISCL = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{k} \lambda_j^2}} \sum_{j=1}^{k} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \rho_{ij} X_i \qquad [A2]$$

donde X_i toma el valor de la variable original tipificada y ρ_{ij} es la carga factorial del componente *j* en la variable *i* y λj, el autovalor asociado al componente *j*.

La tabla A1, de autovalores y porcentaje de varianza explicada muestra que, si utilizáramos el criterio de elección de reducción de la dimensión a partir de autovalores superiores a la unidad, podríamos recoger un 66% de la variabilidad de la muestra con los dos primeros autovalores. Los estadísticos relativos a la técnica muestran su adecuación al análisis planteado. Por su parte, aunque el test de Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0,5) está en el límite para la utilización de la técnica en la reducción de la dimensión, como nuestro objetivo no es la extracción de componentes sino el peso que tendría cada variable en los mismos, este resultado no afecta la validez de los valores obtenidos ni de la técnica empleada.

4 Para una descripción detallada sobre la derivación de esta fórmula puede consultarse Borrás and Rúa (2003: 5-6).

Tabla A1. Autovalores y porcentaje de varianza explicada por Análisis de Componentes Principales

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Componentes	Autovalores		
	Total	% de la varianza	% acumulado
1	1,599	39,963	39,963
2	1,060	26,495	66,459
3	0,913	22,816	89,275
4	0,429	10,725	100,000
Medida de adecuación muestral de Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin			0,493
Prueba de esfericidad de Bartlett			26.898,090
Significatividad			0,000

Tabla A2. Pesos de las variables originales en el Indicador de calidad laboral según Análisis de Componentes Principales (ACP).

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Variables originales	Ponderación ACP	Ponderación ACP en tanto por uno
Contratos indefinidos sobre total (INDEF)	0,120	0,079
Jornada completa sobre total (JC)	0,737	0,490
Indicador de salario diario a jornada completa (SAL)	0,119	0,079
Indicador de duración en días (DUR)	0,528	0,351

Maintaining the Cooperative Identity in Times of COVID - Reinventing and Communicating the Cooperative Brand – the Case of Dukunde Kawa Coffee Cooperative (Musasa) in Rwanda

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Maintaining the Cooperative Identity in Times of COVID - Reinventing and Communicating the Cooperative Brand – the Case of Dukunde Kawa Coffee Cooperative (Musasa) in Rwanda

Abstract

According to the reputation theory, organisations should pursue a strong corporate identity, and articulate this through its ethics, aims and values to distinguish themselves from others and survive in a competitive environment. Digital communication channels are increasingly used to present organisational identity both internally and externally, however little is known about how cooperatives undertake this challenge. With the Covid Pandemic raging through the world, modes of collaboration and communication changed drastically due to lockdowns. This was exacerbated in developing countries with limited resources to pursue transitions to digital communication that mostly relies on the availability of the Internet. This paper presents a case study approach using data on how the Rwandan Dukunde Kawa Coffee Cooperative responded to the COVID lockdown challenge. It shows how the cooperative maintained communication with both its external stakeholders and international buyers as well as its member farmers. Results showcase that moving 90 per cent of the cooperative communication towards online to communicate its brand. It also shows that making changes such as including ICTs in its processes and strengthening its solidarity fund scheme allowed the cooperative to be resilient during the pandemic. The resilience and innovation have continued post lockdown measures.

Keywords: cooperative identity, cooperative brand, corporate communication,

Rwanda

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Maintenir l'identité coopérative à l'époque du COVID - Réinventer et communiquer la marque coopérative - le cas de la coopérative de café Dukunde Kawa (Musasa) au Rwanda

Résumé

Selon la théorie de la réputation, les organisations doivent rechercher une forte identité d'entreprise et l'articuler autour de son éthique, de ses objectifs et de ses valeurs afin de se distinguer des autres et de survivre dans un environnement concurrentiel. Les canaux de communication numérique sont de plus en plus utilisés pour présenter l'identité organisationnelle à la fois en interne et en externe, mais on sait peu de choses sur la manière dont les coopératives relèvent ce défi. Avec la pandémie de Covid qui a fait rage dans le monde, les modes de collaboration et de communication ont radicalement changé en raison des blocages. Cette situation a été exacerbée dans les pays en développement dont les ressources sont limitées pour poursuivre la transition vers la communication numérique qui repose principalement sur la disponibilité de l'Internet. Cet article présente une étude de cas utilisant des données sur la manière dont la coopérative rwandaise de café Dukunde Kawa a répondu au défi du verrouillage COVID. Il montre comment la coopérative a maintenu la communication avec ses parties prenantes externes et ses acheteurs internationaux, ainsi qu'avec ses agriculteurs membres. Les résultats montrent que 90 % de la communication de la coopérative s'est faite en ligne pour faire connaître sa marque. Ils montrent également que des changements tels que l'intégration des TIC dans ses processus et le renforcement de son système de fonds de solidarité ont permis à la coopérative de résister à la pandémie. La résilience et l'innovation se sont poursuivies après les mesures de confinement.

Mots-clés: identité coopérative, marque coopérative, communication d'entreprise, Rwanda

Mantener la Identidad Cooperativa en Tiempos de COVID - Reinventar y Comunicar la Marca Cooperativa: el Caso de la Cooperativa de Café Dukunde Kawa (Musasa) en Ruanda

Resumen

Según la teoría de la reputación, las organizaciones deben perseguir una identidad corporativa fuerte y articularla a través de su ética, objetivos y valores para distinguirse de las demás y sobrevivir en un entorno competitivo. Los canales de comunicación digital se utilizan cada vez más para presentar la identidad organizativa tanto interna como externamente, sin embargo, se sabe poco sobre cómo las cooperativas afrontan este reto. Con la pandemia de Covid asolando el mundo, los modos de colaboración y comunicación cambiaron drásticamente debido a los bloqueos. Esto se agravó en los países en desarrollo con recursos limitados para llevar a cabo la transición a la comunicación digital, que depende principalmente de la disponibilidad de Internet. Este artículo presenta un estudio de caso basado en datos sobre la respuesta de la cooperativa ruandesa Dukunde Kawa Coffee al bloqueo de COVID. Muestra cómo la cooperativa mantuvo la comunicación tanto con sus interlocutores externos y compradores internacionales como con sus agricultores miembros. Los resultados muestran que el 90% de la comunicación de la cooperativa se orientó hacia Internet para comunicar su marca. También muestra que la introducción de cambios como la inclusión de las TIC en sus procesos y el refuerzo de su fondo de solidaridad permitieron a la cooperativa resistir durante la pandemia. La resiliencia y la innovación han continuado tras las medidas de cierre.

Palabras clave: identidad cooperativa, marca cooperativa, comunicación corporativa, Ruanda

1. Introduction

Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises and are a unique business model because it is owned, controlled and run by the people who started the business, i.e., the members. The International Cooperative Alliance's Statement on the Cooperative Identity defines cooperatives as: "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise" (ICA, 2018). They are further guided by the seven Cooperative Principles and have at its core that the cooperative should have the benefits it can provide to its members (ICA, 2018). As cooperatives are owned, controlled and managed by their members, this makes cooperatives, people-centred enterprises and distinctly different as a business model due to a dual focus not only on economic benefits but also on social benefits for their members and the community their members are part of. But in times of crisis, such as the COVID pandemic, how do cooperatives respond and adapt to COVID regulations and the need for maintaining business operations? How are they able to maintain communications both with buyers and external stakeholders as well as their own members? Did COVID change the way they used digital communication platforms to maintain their cooperative identity and values?

This study seeks to examine how the Dukunde Kawa coffee-growers' cooperative (Musasa) in Rwanda managed and communicated its distinct cooperative identity to external and internal stakeholders. Using reputation management theory as the conceptual framework it seeks to analyse how COVID impacted on the communication to external stakeholders and internally to their own members. It further seeks to explore how such adaptations have changed relationships.

2. Literature review

According to management theory, an organisation with a solid corporate identity articulates its "corporate ethics, aims and values and presents a sense of individuality that can help differentiate the organisation within its competitive environment" (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997, p.355). This provides both external stakeholders and internal members with direction and purpose regarding design, culture, structure, strategy and communication. Through effective communication, a company can create the stakeholder's perception of the company's identity, image and reputation (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

Reputation management theories have been used primarily to examine investor-owned and for-profit corporations or organisations. Abratt (1989) found that a corporation's reputation comprises three facets, namely the organisation's; a) Philosophy (what the organisation is or the underlying aim and values of the organisation), b) Identity (how it implements its philosophy), and c) Image (what external people see it as or how the organisation is perceived from outside).

Corporate reputation is an intangible asset important for creating customer loyalty, organisational pride among employees, and establishing an authentic and marketable image to the outside world. Corporate reputation, therefore, needs to be managed and communicated both internally and externally to achieve these positive outcomes and finally to ensure performance. Any gap or discrepancy between what the organisation is about, what it says it is and how external stakeholders perceive it may have adverse outcomes for the organisation's reputation and inevitably have negative outcomes in the form of customer loyalty and employee commitment to the organisation (Abratt, 1989). Recent studies have indicated that reputation management is specifically essential in agribusiness where quality and provenance produce is highly rated and profitable (Castilla-Polo, Gallardo-Vázquez, Sánchez-Hernández and Ruiz-Rodríguez, 2018).

Cooperatives are defined as an "autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their everyday economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (ICA, 2018b)". According to the reputation management theory, the definition provides guidance in relation to the underlying philosophy which is autonomy and self-reliance to meet member's economic, social and cultural needs. The definition further provides guidance as to the organisation's identity; according to the reputation theory, identity is defined as how the organisation implements its philosophy. According to cooperative identity, the organisation should be jointly owned and democratically governed. Last, reputation is also dependent on image; i.e., how the cooperative is perceived by from the outside. A cooperative's reputation will therefore depend on coherence between its philosophy, identity and image.

When substantial change and reinvention of purpose and practice is required, communication with both external stakeholders and internal members will demand a concerted effort to maintain the cooperative's reputation, and rely on its cooperative values, its identity that members focus, and its reputation in the community. Castilla-polo et al. (2018) noted that cooperatives have both social and economic objectives and to maintain their reputation, they need to consider all stakeholders' (both external and internal) perceptions. In agribusiness cooperatives, farmers are an important internal stakeholder group (as they are members and not employees) and they have a democratic say in management decisions. It is also showed that agribusiness cooperative's reputation is related to innovation, improving certification systems, pursuing social responsibility and achieving recognition of their work (Castilla-polo et al., 2018). A review of communication strategies in agricultural cooperatives indicated lack of knowledge around what type and how agricultural cooperatives implement effective communication strategies to improve the organisation (Georges and Caleman, 2021). Ineffective communication strategies may lead to discontent and lack of member involvement in the cooperative's governance and support and may ultimately lead to failure. Brown et al. (2013), cited in Georges and Caleman (2021), found that agricultural cooperatives in the USA had been slower than other organisations to pursue more effective communication strategies and digital technologies. A study among Brazilian cooperative farmers found that horizontal communication between farmer members supported collective action and participation. In contrast, vertical communication from the cooperative to the farmer members was essential for quality enhancement and productivity (Cechin, Bijman, Pascucci and Omta, 2013).

Research have shown that digital

transformation and communication is vital for maintaining information flow, inclusion of smallholder farmer members, relationship maintenance and building, and democratic decision-making essential for performance and social responsibility activities. It has also proven an important channel for maintaining knowledge about health requirements for staff/members during the pandemic. Lastly, it provides a tool for communicating and accessing external stakeholders in the global value chain essential both during and post-COVID19. Digital inclusion of smallholder farmers may prevent disruptions in income for vulnerable farmers (Quayson, Bai and Osei, 2020). Likewise, digital inclusion and technology may provide smallholder farmers with a way to be part of extension services and the global supply chain (Deichmann, Goyal and Mishra, 2016).

3. Methodology

This paper presents a case study on Dukunde Kawa Coffee-Growers' Cooperative in Rwanda. The cooperative was founded in 2000. It produces high-end coffee for the international market and employs a majority female workforce. The cooperative ensures maximum benefits to local families. The cooperative currently has 1176 coffee farmers and is Fair Trade Certified since 2004. The farmers receive both economic and social benefits from this environmentally sustainable coffee industry. Eighty per cent (80%) of Dukundekawa's producers are women. The cooperative owns 4 dry mills (Ruli, Mbilima, Nkara and Musambira), covering more than 392 ha of arable land (Dudunde Kawa Cooperative, 2021).

This paper, drawing on limited data, presents an analysis of main themes communicated through Dudunde Kawa's online channels (website, social media) to understand how the cooperative identity has been maintained while reinventing products/services and processes during the COVID19. The study accessed information regarding practical implementation of COVID19 prevention measures in the field, from Mr. Ernest Nsimyimana, Dudunde Kawa's Managing Director via phone calls to get information on the use of digital platforms. It further received information about social media and IT use during the COVID lockdowns through extensive email interviews with Mr. Gilbert. Muhire (Marketing Officer of Dukunde Kawa Cooperative). In so doing, the study seeks to analyse how the use of ICTs has allowed the cooperative to (1) keep its internal operations functional despite of COVID-related restrictions, (2) to communicate the cooperative brand under crisis, and (3) to maintain relationships and reputation with external partners and clients.

4. The Pandemic crisis and cooperatives in the Rwandan context

The Rwandan government appreciates the role cooperatives play in the country's economic transformation through their effort to implement inclusive and sustainable practices. These are also seen as self-efficacy organisations par excellence. The difference between cooperatives and other organisations is that community members pool together their own funds instead of relying on external investors or shareholders. In other words, cooperative members are owners, employees, customers and beneficiaries. This has improved trust between members and built democratic values, which have been instrumental in improving living standards of cooperative members and, through this, contributing to Rwanda's economic growth (Harelimana, Mugwaneza and Musabwa, 2020).

In Rwanda, cooperatives have been able to help their members by providing financial assistance to members in bonuses, dividends, or mutual assistance. For example, between the beginning of 2019 and April 2020, cooperatives mobilised 1.2 billion Rwandan Francs, which were used to support members in this challenging situation. Despite this quick response, it was evident that some cooperatives needed to create or strengthen their solidarity funding schemes to prepare for future crises. Moreover, cooperatives have been encouraged by government to integrate ICT services and improve financial management and governance (Harelimana, Mugwaneza and Musabwa, 2020).

Cooperatives have proven to be more resilient during crises due to their focus on the wellbeing of members. This resilience is also created by a sense of belonging to the communities in which cooperatives are anchored, increasing solidarity and trust among members who see themselves as a community more than they see themselves as co-workers (Billiet, Dufays, Friedel and Staessens, 2021). Crises can be starting points for cooperatives when community members who share the same values and identity come together to find solutions to a common problem caused by the crisis (Defourny and Develtere, 1999).

4.1 Coffee cooperatives in Rwanda during the COVID19

Coffee exports in Rwanda were not severely affected by COVID19, mainly due to the forward contracting nature of transactions used in the international coffee trade. Instead, Rwandan cooperatives saw this as an opportunity to increase resilience by investing in and improving the use of technology such as mobile phone text messages (SMS) to deal with issues encountered in the coffee value chain, increasing production, improving quality assurance based on criteria by different coffee exporters (Apell and Morjaria, 2021). As a consequence, most Rwandan agricultural cooperatives continued operating but were affected by the lack of other services such as transport (Harelimana, Mugwaneza and Musabwa, 2020) and banking services since only a limited number of staffs were allowed to work following COVID19 sanitary restrictions (G. Muhire, personal communication, 6 August 2021).

In Rwanda, when COVID19 first hit in April 2020, it was at the peak season for coffee harvest. This had serious implications for especially the cost, availability and efficiency of coffee-pickers. The main issues coffee farmers faced were the measures implemented to curb the pandemic such as social distancing (Sikhakhane, 2021; Joe Coffee, 2021). Moreover, the pandemic affected other income-generating activities farmers usually run besides coffee farming (dairy cows and other agricultural production). Despite these challenges, resilience is also well pronounced (Joe Coffee, 2021). Although farmers generally saw their income decrease due to the pandemic, through the social capital of cooperatives, farmers survived and were resilient through mutual support offered within and by the cooperative structure (Tasamba, 2021; Hamilton, 2020). This solidarity is also seen in various African countries where members of cooperatives were both supported by government and by the members during this pandemic (ICA, 2021). Similarly, elsewhere in the world, cooperatives have been reaching out to members and their national communities at large. Moreover, the ICA is urging cooperatives to reach out to cooperatives beyond national borders to maintain their identity, which survived all sorts of crises, including world wars and recessions (Iyer, 2021).

5. Findings - Maintaining business continuity during COVID

When the pandemic hit in April 2020, Dukunde Kawa Cooperative swiftly moved its communication mainly towards online to keep the relationship with clients as international travel had been banned, making it impossible for the cooperative to organise physical meetings, especially with partners from foreign countries.

When the pandemic hit in April 2020, Dukunde Kawa Cooperative swiftly moved its communication mainly towards online to keep the relationship with clients as international travel had been banned, making it impossible for the cooperative to organise physical meetings, especially with partners from foreign countries.

Furthermore, all kinds of cash payments between buyers and suppliers were not considered COVID-safe, and the cooperative subsequently adopted a cashless payments/transactions using phone-based apps during the coffee season. This was also important to protect the health of the members of the cooperative.

Although the three reputation management components were presented separately, overlaps were common. The letters sent to partners are an excellent example of this overlap: In one letter sent as an email attachment, Dukunde Kawa Cooperative announces to partners how it addressed embezzlement issues by putting in place a new board (Dukunde Kawa Cooperative, 2020). In another letter to its partners, the cooperative shared some successes despite COVID related disruptions, thanked the partners for the support and reiterated its commitment to the wellbeing of cooperative members (Dukunde Kawa Cooperative, 2021).

> *We encouraged communication towards social media platforms instead of physical meetings. [...] They facilitate continuous communication with our casual workers, members, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.*
>
> *WhatsApp and mobile phone short text messages (SMS) were mainly used during the pandemic amongst cooperative members. (G. Muhire, personal communication, 6 August 2021)*

To maintain the relationships with external and international stakeholders and buyers and by doing so, to maintain business viability and income for farmers, the promotion of cooperative was of utmost importance during the lock-down. Initially this was primarily done by the managing director, through LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Then with time an employee came on board and took over the social media aspect of the business in addition to other marketing activities. During the lock-down, members of the cooperatives used WhatsApp and SMS to organise small group meetings for those who have the devices and group communications.

> *The managing director of the cooperative mainly manages social media accounts. [...] (G. Muhire, personal communication, 6 August 2021).*

Since the easing of the Covid lockdowns, in early 2022, Dudunde Kawa Cooperative is going from strength to strength and using multiple social media platforms to communicate with their farmers, buyers, roasters and coffee-shops. From their official Facebook page, we can see that in March 2022 one of their women's groups, the Rambagirakawa Women Group won the Africa Equity Champion Award for their support to progress women's situation (Dukundekawa Musasa, n.d.). The Facebook page further informs that

Dukunde Kawa opened their own certified coffee roasting facility in October 2022, supported by funds from the US African Development Foundation. In conjunction with this they have established a Coffee School which graduates young farmers to become coffee connoisseurs, and have constructed a Café for farmers to enjoy their own products.

They have also throughout the year continued the Girinka program where they use surplus to provide dairy cows to their most vulnerable families which comprises mostly single women-headed households. To date, the communication with stakeholders from outside Rwanda is mainly done through digital communication channels. The followers increase with time and the achievements are communicated to stakeholders via social media channels mainly. As an example of how the cooperative nurtures the connection between the cooperatives, farmers, buyers and roaster, and actively exhibits cooperative and cultural values of self-help and development when explaining how they have financed the Girinka Program (quote from a Facebook post the 7 October 2022):

> *Girinka translate "Have a cow" a symbol of unity, respect and gratitude, it's a centuries-old practice in Rwanda. Giving a cow to someone or 'GutangaInka', translated, it's 'sealing a bond of friendship' & remains a cultural practice owned, understood and valued by Rwandans.*
>
> *We share the same bonds with our roasters and buyers! Our special gratitude to Belco SAS @belcogreenco who helped us to secure coffee premiums that was used to buy these 10 cows that were given to vulnerable farmers. Only 0.2$ per Kg bought in season 2021, made a difference.*

6. Findings – Thematic analysis of the communicated contents

According to the thematic analysis of the content on social media, letters to partners and the interviews conducted with cooperative management, the cooperative's communication hinged on themes that can be grouped under 3 categories which correspond to Abratt's (1989) components of reputation: (1) ethos (philosophy), (2) its implementation through service provision and procedures (identity) which have an impact on (3) how the cooperative is viewed by external partners (image) who keep the relationship, new clients who bring new business and certifiers who restore suspended certifications. The following three sections will detail how Dukunde Kawa Cooperative used online communication, adopted ICTs and changed/initiated processes to maintain its reputation during COVID times.

6.1 Philosophy

As far as corporate reputation is concerned, 'Philosophy' stands for the ethos of a company or cooperative (Abratt, 1989). According to the management of Dukunde Kawa, the cooperative is presented as a well-organised cooperative whose women unit RAMBAGIRAKAWA is one of its distinctive assets. Dukunde Kawa deals with coffee production and engages in production of handicrafts such as embroidery and basket weaving during off-season. In 2015 the cooperative established a Milk Dairy to help members generate additional income. The cooperative also runs a lending scheme that allows members to borrow up to 30,000 RWF (about 30 US Dollars) payable in 3 months with no interest (G. Muhire, personal communication, 6 August 2021).

The colourful website (www.dukundekawa.rw) also subtly presents the cooperative's philosophy of empowering the communities – especially women – while producing high-quality coffee. This ethos is also seen on the social media platforms where the quality of products and women empowerment are among other recurring themes. The following section showcases how this ethos is implemented.

6.2 Identity

Abratt (1989) defines identity as means through which a company, or a cooperative for this study, implements its ethos through service provision and processes. Both on the website and social media Dukunde Kawa did a remarkable job by emphasising efficient and COVID-safe processes where the high standard of coffee production is observed to ensure the safety of business partners and buyers. This high standard of COVID-safe processes also contributes to protect the health of their member farmers. Dukunde Kawa Cooperative showcases that most members are women and as such contribute to women's financial independence and education. The website further documents that the cooperative provides timely members' payments, and informs about the establishment of other income-generating projects such as handicrafts and dairy to make sure farmers continue to earn money during the off-season. Regarding the social solidarity within the cooperative during COVID19, Dukunde Kawa Cooperative distributed food supplies and soaps, among other necessities, to support livelihood and health of its farmers. This is in line with literature that emphasises solidarity as a central aspect of cooperative resilience in terms of adversity (Tasamba, 2021; Hamilton, 2020).

Moreover, the cooperative showcases its use of digital tools such as digitising information related to sales for better efficiency. This confirms conclusions by Harelimana, Mugwaneza and Musabwa (2020), for whom incorporation of ICT services contributes to improved governance and financial management.

The cooperative also initiated procedures to encourage members to join the EJO Heza Long Term Savings Scheme which is a government supported program that aims to support Rwandans to save for a dignified retirement. Enrolment and saving in the Ejo Heza scheme are facilitated and made easy through multiple phone-based apps (Government of Rwanda n.d.). This activity further aligns with recommendations for cooperatives to strengthen solidarity schemes to meet the needs of cooperative members by Harelimana, Mugwaneza and Musabwa (2020).

More recently we see that the cooperative has furthered its cooperative identity and values of care for community through establishing the Girinka scheme where surplus is used to provide dairy cows to their most vulnerable farmers. They implement and inform about certifications they obtain and clearly explains this to their buyers and roasters providing additional information about the extended social impact buying coffee from Dukunde Kawa has.

6.3 Image

Regarding the image, or how the cooperative is perceived by external partners (Abratt, 1989), social media presence and engagement provide a glimpse of how partners perceive the cooperative, especially the re-posts of partners' content that mention Dukunde Kawa Cooperative. Consistent with the assertion of Castilla-Polo et al. (2018), each step of the value chain that portrays the cooperative members and identity contributes to reputation management. Dukunde Kawa Cooperative systematically shows where the coffee comes from, who processes it, and who benefits from it. They clearly exhibit the different types of environmental and Fair Trade certifications

they have achieved providing evidence of third-party audit of authentication. Further their website presents images and names of many current international buyers and coffeeshops which potential buyers can use to ask for advice on their coffee. The curation of images and the accompanying captions are also means of positive image building, an effort that the cooperative does very well, albeit with some limitations.

Concerning the social media, when the Covid19 Pandemic hit in March 2020, the cooperative had no social media platforms. However, as of mid-August 2021, Dukunde Kawa had profiles on LinkedIn with 24 (54 now) followers, Facebook with (882 followers now) 871 page likes, Twitter with 91 followers and Instagram with 807 followers. Instagram has the highest engagement rate, with some posts reaching 70 likes. The content is around three significant axes consistent with Abratt's (1989) observations explicated earlier. Some other content is about coffee's importance in people's daily lives and observations of holidays such as Eid al-Fitr or the International Women's Day.

Although Dukunde Kawa consistently displays logos (of partners, its various brands, etc.), its digital media strategy needs polishing to go beyond posting, using hashtags and tagging to increase audience engagement. This situation confirms Georges and Coleman's (2021) analysis that agricultural cooperatives often do not know how to implement effective communication strategies.

7. Conclusion

The different communication modes and strategies implemented by the cooperatives bring together the cooperative's philosophy, identity, and image to wholistically communicate the corporate brand. The strengthening of the cooperative brand has been due to the cooperative's adoption of online & mobile phone-based social media and other communication channels as well as the incorporation of ICTs to strengthen various actions of cooperative and members, including protection of members' health through mobile payments and distribution of soap and other necessities.

Results showcase that moving 90 per cent of the cooperative communication towards online to communicate its brand. It also shows that making changes such as including ICTs in processes and strengthening its solidarity funds scheme allowed the cooperative to be resilient during the COVID19 pandemic lockdown.

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Vertical Integration and Member Benefits of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka

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Vertical Integration and Member Benefits of Cooperatives in Sri Lanka

Abstract

The Agri-food sector in developing countries has transformed as a result of rising income, urbanization, and technological advancements. The transformation has been characterized by organizational and institutional change via the rise of vertical integration. In this context, this study examines if smallholder farmers benefit from the vertical integration of their cooperatives. Accordingly, this study empirically analyzed how the level of vertical integration affects member benefits of cooperatives using survey data from 309 smallholder rice farmers in Sri Lanka. Exploratory factor analysis identified five key groups of benefits; business and financial, livelihood, technology and information, low-cost inputs, and democratic control and education. Of them, business and financial, and technology and information benefits were significantly better for the members of fully integrated cooperatives. The research findings have important implications for managers and policymakers in providing better services to members and promoting cooperatives' vertical integration aiming to bring better member benefits.

Keywords: smallholder farmer, cooperatives, member benefits, rice, vertical integration

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Intégration verticale et avantages pour les membres des coopératives au Sri Lanka

Abstract

Le secteur agroalimentaire des pays en développement s'est transformé sous l'effet de l'augmentation des revenus, de l'urbanisation et des progrès technologiques. Cette transformation a été caractérisée par des changements organisationnels et institutionnels via l'essor de l'intégration verticale. Dans ce contexte, cette étude examine si les petits exploitants agricoles bénéficient de l'intégration verticale de leurs coopératives. En conséquence, cette étude a analysé empiriquement comment le niveau d'intégration verticale affecte les avantages des membres des coopératives en utilisant les données d'enquête de 309 petits exploitants rizicoles au Sri Lanka. Une analyse factorielle exploratoire a permis d'identifier cinq groupes clés d'avantages : les avantages commerciaux et financiers, les moyens de subsistance, la technologie et l'information, les intrants à faible coût, ainsi que le contrôle démocratique et l'éducation. Parmi eux, les avantages commerciaux et financiers, ainsi que les avantages liés à la technologie et à l'information, étaient nettement plus importants pour les membres des coopératives pleinement intégrées. Les résultats de la recherche ont des implications importantes pour les gestionnaires et les décideurs politiques, qui doivent fournir de meilleurs services aux membres et promouvoir l'intégration verticale des coopératives afin d'améliorer les avantages pour les membres.

Mots clés: petits exploitants agricoles, coopératives, avantages pour les membres, riz, intégration vertical

Integración Vertical y Beneficios para los Socios de las Cooperativas de Sri Lanka

Resumen

El sector agroalimentario de los países en desarrollo se ha transformado como consecuencia del aumento de la renta, la urbanización y los avances tecnológicos. La transformación se ha caracterizado por el cambio organizativo e institucional a través del aumento de la integración vertical. En este contexto, el presente estudio examina si los pequeños agricultores se benefician de la integración vertical de sus cooperativas. En consecuencia, este estudio analizó empíricamente cómo el nivel de integración vertical afecta a los beneficios de los miembros de las cooperativas utilizando datos de encuestas realizadas a 309 pequeños agricultores arroceros de Sri Lanka. El análisis factorial exploratorio identificó cinco grupos clave de beneficios: empresariales y financieros, medios de vida, tecnología e información, insumos de bajo coste y control democrático y educación. De ellos, los beneficios empresariales y financieros, y los tecnológicos y de información fueron significativamente mejores para los miembros de las cooperativas plenamente integradas. Los resultados de la investigación tienen importantes implicaciones para los gestores y responsables políticos a la hora de prestar mejores servicios a los socios y promover la integración vertical de las cooperativas con el objetivo de aportar mejores beneficios a los socios.

Palabras clave: pequeño agricultor, cooperativas, beneficios para los socios, arroz, integración vertical

1. Introduction

The agri-food industry in developing countries is transforming toward supplying modern markets in response to increasing income, urbanization, and technological developments (Tray, Garnevska and Shadbolt, 2021; Reardon, 2015; Augustin et al., 2021; Maertens and Swinnen, 2012). Consequently, smallholder farmers in those countries face both opportunities and challenges. Meeting demand for food quality, safety standards, and product differentiation through consistent supply is a challenge for those smallholders, who confront poor access to inputs, information, technology, capital, and value-adding services (Maspaitella et al., 2018; Fernando et al., 2021). This reduces the opportunity to generate higher income through market participation (Reardon et al., 2009; Singh, 2016; Wiggins, Kirsten and Llambí, 2010).

In this context, different models of farmer collectives such as cooperatives and farmer companies, and various vertical coordination arrangements such as vertical integration and contract farming have emerged and were promoted by the development agencies to link farmers to modern markets and increase their income (Hao et al., 2018; Imami, Valentinov and Skreli, 2021; Shumeta, D'Haese and Verbeke, 2018). Vertical integration internally controls successive stages of production through retailing of agricultural products in the vertical systems of the value chain within a business enterprise investing its financial and non-financial resources (Harrigan, 1984; Lehmberg, 2015). Theoretically, organizing the control of agricultural production, processing, wholesaling, and retailing under one management control is conducive to increasing production efficiency (Singh and Mishra, 2015). Organizing the successive activities of a value chain within the organization reduces transaction cost (Balmann et al., 2006), avoids market risks (Bellemare, 2015), maintains price stability, ensures factor support (Fałkowski, 2012; Trifković, 2014), and has a positive effect on promoting farmers' income and sustainable agricultural development (Ao et al., 2021).

Some scholars have studied the benefits of cooperative organizations to their members in the agriculture sector. There is a wide range of financial and non-financial benefits to cooperative members according to the literature. Accordingly, cooperatives provide financial returns to members and help to build their farm and non-farm assets (Bernard, Taffesse and Gabre-Madhin, 2018; Shumeta and D'Haese, 2016; Wollni and Zeller, 2007). Members have increased access to production inputs, technology, information, and services (Getnet and Anullo, 2012; Bacon et al., 2008; Markelova et al., 2009; Holloway et al., 2000). Members also benefit from receiving patronage refunds and/or dividends, building investment capital and sharing financial risk, and controlling a business to their advantage (Birchall, 2012; Österberg and Nilsson, 2009; Dunn, 1988). The development of a sense of community among members, an opportunity for community learning, and support received during hardships such as natural disasters have also been identified as important member benefits (Fulton, 1999; Wilkinson, 1991; Duffey, 1990; Stafford, 1990). Members also benefit from education, training, employment and livelihood opportunities, improved social values, attitudes, democracy, and equality principles (Fairbairn, 2004; Merrett and Walzer, 2001; Zeuli and Radel, 2005; King, Adler and Grieves, 2013; Spielman, Cohen and Mogues, 2008). Moreover, cooperative members benefit from the sustainable use of natural resources and environmentally friendly practices (Galappaththi, Kodithuwakku and Galappaththi, 2016; Bauwens and Defourny, 2017). Table 1 presents different types of member benefits that may receive by the members as discussed in the literature.

Table 1. Types of member benefits.

Benefit theme	Benefit description	Reference
Financial returns and assets	Members receive direct financial returns through better prices for farm products, growth in farm production and farm profits, farm financial assets, properties, and savings.	Alho, 2015; Getnet and Anullo 2012; Mojo, Fischer and Degefa 2017; Lauermann et al., 2020.
Inputs, technology, information, and service access	Enhanced access to inputs services and information such as agrochemical, fertilizer, technology, irrigation water, seed, credit and other financial services, transport, healthcare, extension, processing services, grocery retail, certification, and market information at a subsidized price or free of charge.	Abebaw and Haile 2013; Getnet and Anullo 2012; Haque, Deb and Medeiros 2009; Markelova et al., 2009; Owusu, 2021.
Ownership benefits	Members benefit from claiming ownership rights by owning a business and sharing the risk of capital. Accordingly, members claim patronage refunds and/or dividends, pool capital, and share financial risks, involved in controlling a business for their advantage.	Birchall, 2012; Fulton and Ketilson 1992; Hansmann, 1996; Markelova et al., 2009; Österberg and Nilsson, 2009; D'Amato et al., 2021.
Community benefits	These include the common benefits entertained by a particular community of cooperative members such as building a sense of community, community learning, protection, and support during unexpected circumstances, deaths, and natural calamities.	Duffey, 1990; Fulton, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Tirivayi et al., 2018; Tolbert et al., 2002; Wilkinson, 1991; Mastronardi and Romagnoli, 2020.
Social benefit	These are the benefits that diffuse to the wider community in the form of public goods and services. Cooperatives act as schools for training and education, democracy, equality, accountability, and building leaders. They create livelihood opportunities and employment, promote social capital, cooperation, and civic-minded behaviour, and act as a government distribution arm to serve society.	Apparao, Shadbolt and Garnevska, 2020; Bauwens and Defourny, 2017; King, Adler and Grieves, 2013; Majee and Hoyt, 2009; Woldegebrial, 2010; Spielman, Cohen and Mogues, 2008; Zeuli and Radel, 2005; Kustepeli et al., 2020.
Environmental benefits	These benefits are primarily related to improved sustainability and environmental performance of members through sustainable use of soil, water, and agrochemicals, and increased access to and use of information on sustainable production and harvesting practices, renewable energy, and waste services.	Bauwens and Defourny, 2017; Ma and Abdulai, 2018; Ma, Abdulai and Goetz, 2018; Mojo, Fischer and Degefa, 2015; Perthen-Palmisano and Jakl 2005; Ma and Zhu, 2020.

However, there is limited information in the literature on whether vertical integration of a cooperative organisation could provide better benefits for members apart from a qualitative study (Zhong et al., 2018; Abdul-Rahaman and Abdulai, 2020; Ao et al., 2021) that examined the member benefits of vertically coordinated dairy cooperatives in China. Therefore, this study aims to empirically compare the perceived member benefits of two groups of cooperatives (partially and fully integrated cooperatives)

in Sri Lanka's rice sector. In this study, partially integrated cooperatives centrally control the supply of inputs, provision of services and information, production of primary agricultural products, and assembling and marketing of primary products. Fully integrated cooperatives centrally control input supply, service and information provision, production, assembling and marketing of primary products, processing, wholesaling, and retailing. Thereby this study contributes to the cooperative literature by examining the impact of vertical integration on its members. Also, to our knowledge, this is the first study that compares two levels of vertical integration in cooperatives in a staple food crop sector.

The important research question of this study is whether the member benefits of fully integrated cooperatives are better compared to partially integrated cooperatives. Understanding the member benefits of vertically integrated cooperatives is important. The findings of this study will suggest important implications for cooperative managers particularly in adding and prioritizing the services that are more beneficial to their members. The findings in this study also have policy implications for promoting vertical integration to meet the emerging food quality and safety concerns in general and particularly for Sri Lanka's agri-food system.

Rice is the single most important staple food crop in Sri Lanka, grown predominantly in smallholdings of less than 0.4 hectares. The rice sector occupies 34% of the country's total agricultural land and accounts for approximately 40% of Sri Lanka's crop production. Rice itself provides direct employment to about 1.8 million smallholder farmers (Korale Gedara, Ratnasiri and Bandara, 2016). The contribution of the rice sector to the Sri Lankan economy accounts for 0.7 % of the GDP. The annual average per capita consumption of rice is 114 kg (including rice and rice-based products) (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). The present rice industry is characterized by higher demand for quality and product differentiation. The number of vertically integrated businesses in the rice industry is on the rise by incorporating upstream and downstream value-adding activities. For example, large-scale rice millers have acquired new technology and expanded their businesses vertically to include wholesaling and retailing functions. Rice collectors have invested in rice milling and trading of inputs. However, only a small percentage of farmers are involved in value-adding and supplying to high-value markets (Senanayake and Premaratne, 2016).

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework shown in Figure 1 postulates that the level of vertical integration affects cooperative member benefits.

Partially integrated cooperatives centrally control some of the successive activities of a product value chain from the supply of inputs, services and information, production, to marketing and assembling. Fully integrated cooperatives centrally control all successive activities of a value chain including the supply of inputs, services and information, production, assembling and marketing, processing, wholesaling, and retailing. As a strategy, vertically integrated organizations may centrally control some or all of the activities of a product value chain aiming to create and appropriate more value (Barney and Hesterly, 2015). Therefore, it is argued that the fully integrated cooperatives have better opportunities to create and appropriate more value than partially integrated cooperatives (Ao et al., 2021). The fully integrated cooperatives are supposed to retain a bigger share of the value chain since their value chain straight link to the consumers compared to partially integrated cooperatives (Caraciolo and Lombardi, 2012). Thus, the vertical integration strategy reduces coordination costs and optimizes the production system by internally organizing the supply of inputs, services and information (Chang et al., 2016). Accordingly, it is suggested to have low coordination costs and more optimized operations in fully integrated cooperatives. On this background, and being the integrator is a cooperative which operates on the principles of user-owner, user-control and user-benefit, fully integrated cooperatives have the potential to distribute better benefits to their members compared to partially integrated cooperatives.

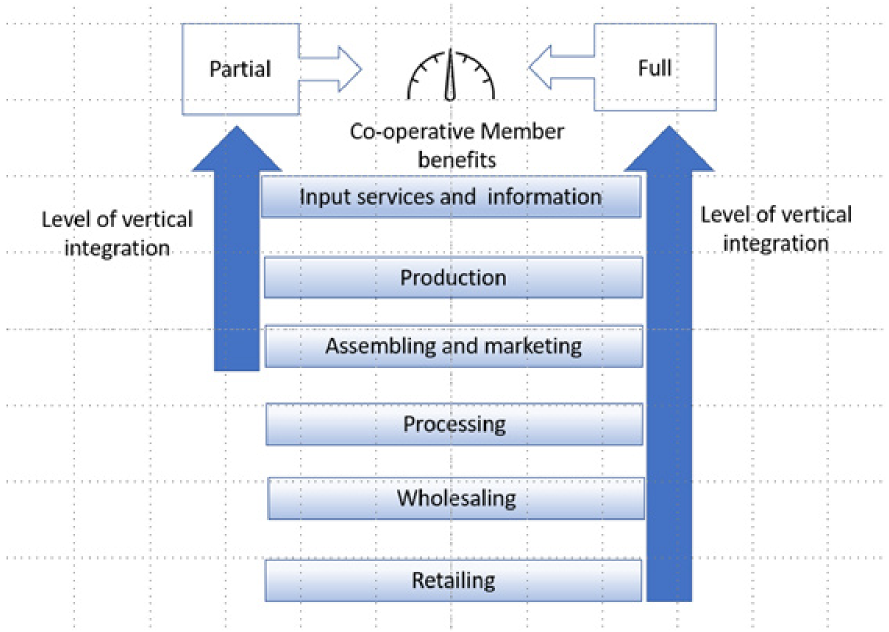

Figure 1.
Theoretical framework.

3. Materials and methods

This study used a quantitative methodology. The data were collected from January to April 2018 in the north-central province of Sri Lanka (Figure 2) which is the second-largest rice-producing province in the country.

Figure 2.
Study region

The cooperatives that undertake rice business activities are multipurpose cooperatives and consist of heterogeneous members with different backgrounds such as rice farmers, farmers of other crops, livestock farmers, laborers, other professionals, consumers, and so forth.

The cooperatives that potentially fulfil the research's definitions of partially and fully integrated cooperatives were identified based on the interviews held with the officers of the north-central provincial department of cooperative development (DCD) in Sri Lanka. Two assistant commissioners and two cooperative development officers who are directly involved in monitoring the cooperatives in the province were interviewed. These interviews sought information on the number of cooperatives that perform rice-related business activities in the province, their geographical location, types of rice-related business activities undertaken by those cooperatives, and their contact information. Accordingly, twenty-six registered cooperatives that undertake rice-related business activities were identified in the study province (north-central). Following the identification of cooperatives involved in rice-related business activities, the officers of the respective cooperatives were contacted over the phone to inquire about specific rice value chain activities controlled by them. Accordingly, we identified eleven cooperatives in the partially integrated cluster (the cooperatives that control the supply of inputs, services, and information, produce rice paddy, and assemble and market rice paddy) and three cooperatives in the fully integrated cluster (the cooperatives that control the supply of inputs, services, and information, produce rice-paddy, assemble and market rice-paddy, processing, wholesaling, and retailing). Of them, all three fully integrated cooperatives were included in the study. Three partially integrated cooperatives were selected randomly from a total of eleven to be comparable to the number of fully integrated cooperatives.

Data was collected from 309 smallholder rice growing members using random sampling. Since these cooperatives consist of members with different backgrounds, the registry of rice farmers has been used as the sampling frame. There were about 700 to 1000 rice-growing members in each of the selected cooperatives and at least 50 rice-growing members were included in the sample from each of the selected cooperatives. Finally, 152 members from the partially integrated cooperatives and 157 members from the fully integrated cooperatives were included in the sample considering the time and resource limitations. The survey was conducted using a pre-tested and structured questionnaire which consisted of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire sought information related to the farmers' and farm characteristics, membership, production and marketing, and input use and cost of production. This section included 21 open and close-ended questions. Section two of the questionnaire consisted of Likert scale questions developed based on literature to elicit member benefits of cooperatives. These Likert scale questions covered six benefit themes as informed by the literature such as (01) financial returns and assets building, (02) inputs, technology, information, and service access, (03) ownership benefits, (04) community benefits, (05) social benefits, and (06) environmental benefits. The first section of the questionnaire was administered by the researcher himself by verbally presenting the questions to the respondent. Section two included 61 Likert scale questions on member benefits measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Section two was self-administered by the respondents in the presence of the researcher following the first section and collected by the researcher. This process ensured the same response rate for both sections as suggested by (Bowling, 2005).

The questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Sinhala using the blind translation-back-translation method as described by Brislin (1976). In an attempt to avoid translation errors, the English language version of the instrument was translated into Sinhala by two bilingual Sri Lankans.

This study used multivariate analysis. The responses to benefit statements were compared using the Mann–Whitney U test (McKnight and Najab, 2010). The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to determine the key benefits (to identify the benefit categories that accounted for the maximum amount of variance within the data in terms of the smallest number of uncorrelated variables). First, the data were checked for their quality to perform EFA employing several preliminary tests. Accordingly, the quality of data to perform EFA was evaluated by employing Sample to Variable Ratio (N:p ratio), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)-criterion, the Bartlett Test, and eigenvalues (Fabrigar and Wegener, 2012). The variables reported with lower than 0.3 correlations were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in a total number of 34 variables used for EFA. The EFA produced five factors. Next, the internal consistency of the factors extracted in the EFA was determined via Cronbach's alpha. Factor analysis enables scores to be calculated for each underlying factor, and these are substituted for the original variables. These factor scores as Kawashima and Shiomi (2007) presented were subjected to a two-sample t-test to compare the mean difference between partially and fully integrated cooperatives.

4. Results

This section presents the profile of sample cooperatives and farmers as well as the results of EFA followed by the comparison of key benefits.

4.1 Profile of the cooperatives and members included in this study

Table 2 provides a comparative overview of the profiles of the cooperatives studied. All the cooperatives were established in the 1970s as a result of the government's multipurpose cooperative restructuring program and grew their membership significantly. The structure of governing board of all cooperatives was similar since it was defined by Sri Lanka's cooperative societies law in 1972. There were some differences in terms of the number of directors because some of the cooperatives studied had not been able to elect their total number of directors prescribed by the cooperative societies law (seven members). Fully integrated cooperatives had relatively more business divisions implying a relatively complex value chain compared to partially integrated cooperatives.

Table 2. Profile of study cooperatives

Description	**Partially integrated**			**Fully integrated**		
	Co-op -1	Co-op -2	Co-op -3	Co-op -4	Co-op -5	Co-op -6
Establishment	1972	1971	1972	1972	1972	1972
Common governance structure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Current board of directors	3	9	7	7	7	3
Board committees	3	5	7	6	10	7
Current membership	6,780	9,524	7,560	1,256	7,860	1,971
Rice growing members	920	1035	986	729	896	783
Starting membership (approximate number)	1,000	1,700	1,500	300	650	821
Business departments	5	5	8	6	10	7

The profile of farmers included in this study is summarized in Table 3. The farmers and farm characteristics of both partially and fully integrated cooperatives were similar. Most farmers-members were of their working age, had limited education, and had significant experience in agriculture. The only difference observed between the two groups of cooperatives was the farm size. Members of fully integrated cooperatives had larger-sized farms.

Table 3. Profile of sample farmers

Item	Partially integrated cooperatives	Fully integrated cooperatives	Total sample
Mean age	54.3	53.9	54.1
Mean years of education	8.9	9.2	9.0
Mean years of experience in rice farming	28.3	26.6	27.4
Mean years of cooperative membership	21.9	21.1	21.5
Average farm size (ha)*	1.9	2.7	2.3
Type of land ownership			
Long-term lease (99 years) (%)	66	66	66
Rent (%)	9	6	7
Both (%)	25	28	27
Ownership of transportation vehicles			
Own (%)	45	45	45
Do not own (%)	55	55	55

4.2 Key benefits of cooperatives

The EFA was conducted to identify the key benefits of the two groups of cooperatives. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4. Five key factors of benefits were identified. The factors were examined using Cronbach's coefficient alpha to test inter-item reliability. Alpha coefficients ranged from 0.77 to 0.93 for all the key benefits except one that reflects very good reliability as suggested by Streiner (2003). Democracy and education benefits that included four benefit variables returned an alpha of 0.67 which was also reasonably strong according to Henson and Roberts (2006). Overall, four of the extracted factors were highly reliable while the remaining one was in the acceptable range (Alho, 2015).

*Loadings below 0.4 have been removed.

Table 4. Key benefits of study cooperatives

Statement (variable)	Business and financial	Livelihood	Technology and information	Low-cost inputs	Democratic control and education
High interest in saving	0.637				
Easy access to credit	0.636				
Financially support illnesses	0.419				
Sponsor religious activities	0.456				
Low interest on credit	0.573				
Get price information	0.588				
Get grocery goods at a low price	0.453				
Compensate crop failures	0.426				
Receive cooperative business training	0.458				
Able to influence paddy/ rice-related business strategies	0.435				
Income increase		0.660			
Yield increase		0.697			
Production increase		0.618			
Land increase		0.662			
Assets increase		0.665			
Quality increase		0.593			
Price increase		0.565			
Get quality fertilizer			0.458		
Get seeds of high-value paddy/rice			0.629		
Get production technology			0.592		
Get information about new markets			0.513		
Get production training			0.529		
Get quality seed			0.548		
Get high-yielding seed			0.536		
Reduce pesticide cost				0.732	
Get seed on credit				0.420	
Get agrochemicals on credit				0.728	
Get fertilizer on credit				0.738	
Reduce fuel cost				0.412	

Promote leaders					0.407
Vote in electing board					0.697
Create employment					0.489
Promote education					0.548
Eigenvalues	10.9	2.5	2.2	1.6	1.4
% variance	29.8	7.4	6.5	5.0	4.4
Cronbach's alpha	0.87	0.87	0.83	0.77	0.67

The first factor accounted for 29.8% of the variance and it proposed ***business and financial benefits.*** This group of benefits included various direct and indirect financial payments made to the members and activities related to members' business involvement. Some of the financial benefits were in the form of subsidised credit services and grocery goods. Direct and indirect financial benefits include various payments made by cooperatives to their members. For instance, the cooperatives sponsored some events such as religious activities, compensated for crop failures, paid high interest on savings, and provided financial support for those members who suffered from illnesses. Concerning business involvement, the cooperatives increased members' access to credit, get members involved in the formulation of business strategies of the cooperatives, and provided business training to members.

The second group of benefits is ***livelihood benefit.*** This factor accounted for 7.4% of the total variance of the data. This benefit group constituted various means of enhancing members' livelihoods. Accordingly, the cooperatives contributed to increasing members' income, crop yields, crop production, and price. Moreover, the building of tangible and intangible assets also appeared to be an important livelihood benefit. Accordingly, there has been a growth of land parcels owned by the members along with other assets which are directly linked to the members' livelihoods. Additionally, the quality of the product also increased which is a very important intangible asset related to members' livelihoods.

The third important key group of member benefits is named ***technology and information.*** This key factor consisted of benefits related to technology, the quality of technology, and market information, and explained 6.5% of the variability in data. Members have obtained quality seeds of high-value rice, quality fertilizer, and training which are directly related to the quality of final products. The cooperatives also provided market information to cooperative members.

The fourth important group of benefits revealed by the results was ***low-cost inputs.*** This factor of benefit explained 5% of the variance in data. This group of benefits included various inputs and services provided by the cooperatives to their members at a lower than market price on cash or credit. Accordingly, the studied cooperatives provided most of the inputs such as fertiliser, weedicide, other agrochemicals, seeds, and pesticides at a low price than the market. Some of the inputs were provided on credit on a verbal agreement to settle at the end of the cropping season after selling the harvest. The provision of these low-cost inputs has contributed to reducing the cost of production.

Democratic control and education came out as the fifth factor of member benefits provided by the study cooperatives. This benefit group accounted for 4.4% of the variance in data. Accordingly, studied cooperatives provided members with better opportunities to involve in the democratic governance of their cooperatives and opened more education opportunities. It was evident that some of the studied cooperatives have early childhood development centres and are involved in early childhood development.

Two of the five key benefits were found to be significantly different between partially and fully integrated cooperatives (Table 5). First, fully integrated cooperatives had significantly better business and financial benefits. The members of fully integrated cooperatives significantly benefitted from business support services provided by their cooperatives. Members in fully integrated cooperatives received better opportunities to be involved in formulating business strategies, accessed subsidized credit, and received various financial receipts in the form of better compensations and sponsorships. Moreover, members in fully integrated cooperatives have achieved significant cost reductions through subsidized fuel and interest on credit compared to their counterparts.

Second, fully integrated cooperatives had better technology and information benefits compared to partially integrated cooperatives. According to the results, fully integrated cooperatives provided better technology and information services. For instance, fertilizer and seeds provided by fully integrated cooperatives were more technologically improved compared to partially integrated cooperatives. Fully integrated cooperatives also provided more technical training which could have contributed to technology upgrading. Additionally, fully integrated cooperatives provided better market information.

Three of the key benefit factors found in this study were comparable between partially and fully integrated cooperatives. First, both partially and fully integrated cooperatives had comparable livelihood benefits. This suggests a similar increase in farm income, price, and production along with comparable growth in farm and household assets such as land and product quality.

Second, a significant difference in low-cost input benefits was not found between partially and fully integrated cooperatives. This result concludes that pesticide, weedicide, chemical, and fertiliser costs were equally reduced for both partially and fully integrated cooperatives. Both cooperatives were more comparable in providing services on credit such as fertiliser and agrochemicals.

Third, members' democratic control and education benefits were comparable between partially and fully integrated cooperatives. Members in both partially and fully integrated cooperatives had comparable benefits from democratic control and education benefits. This is attributed to the unique governance and control arrangements embedded in both partially and fully integrated cooperatives.

5. Discussion

This study found five groups of key member benefits in vertically integrated cooperatives. They are; business and financial, livelihood, technology and information, low-cost inputs, and democratic control and education. Thus, two of these key benefits (business and finance, and technology and information) are associated with the level of vertical integration suggesting better member benefits for fully integrated cooperatives in some of the key areas (Table 5).

The business and financial benefit is one of the key benefits found in this study. Despite being in a different context, this finding is consistent with the findings of Alho (2015) who

Table 5. Comparison of key benefits

Key areas of benefits	Mean factor scores		t-test of difference	
	Partially integrated	Fully integrated	t-stat.	Prob.> ItI
Business and financial	-0.1274	0.1233	-2.45	0.0149**
Livelihood	-0.0288	0.0278	-0.546	0.5854
Technology and information	-0.0985	0.0954	-1.999	0.0465**
Low-cost inputs	-0.0728	0.0705	1.4045	0.1612
Democratic control and education	-0.0017	0.0017	-0.029	0.9761

demonstrated similar member benefits in vertically integrated cooperatives in Finland. According to Alho (2015), vertical integration is primarily driven by economic objectives rather than the social objectives of cooperatives. Moreover, Möllers (2018) also reported that smallholder members of Romanian agricultural cooperatives have benefited from family support services and sponsorships. Fischer and Qaim (2012a) and Woldegebrial (2010) found accessibility to credit services as an important member benefit in their studies. This study also found that business and financial benefits are much better in fully integrated cooperatives compared to partially integrated cooperatives. Nevertheless, in the vertical integration in a similar study, Zhong et al (2018) observed better financial benefits among members of vertically coordinated dairy cooperatives in China.

The second most important member benefit identified in this study was livelihood benefit. This benefit suggests that vertically integrated cooperatives contribute to enhancing members' livelihoods in several ways. This is comparable to the findings of Sisay, Verhees and Van Trijp (2017) who examined the direct and indirect livelihood benefits of members of seed producer cooperatives in Ethiopia. As the results suggest, the cooperatives contribute to commercialising farmers' crop production by increasing the land extent, production, and productivity. This is, however, contrary to the findings of Bernard, Taffesse and Gabre-Madhin (2008), but in support of Tefera and Bijman (2019). Livelihood benefits also suggest the development of intangible assets such as product quality which is a source of high value and it seems that cooperatives support overcoming the barriers faced by the farmers related to quality improvement (Francesconi and Ruben, 2012; Royer, Bijman and Abebe, 2017). The cooperatives on the other hand contribute to realise higher prices as another important livelihood benefit which is comparable to the findings of Kumar et al. (2018) in Indian dairy cooperatives.

**Significant at 5% level.

Livelihood benefits were found to be not significantly different between partially and fully integrated cooperatives. This suggests that the level of vertical integration do not make any difference in members' livelihood benefit.

Technology and information benefits are the third most important group of member benefits. This group of benefits proposes that vertical integration provides access to technology and information reducing the barriers to them. Technology and information are very important in providing specific requirements to achieve product quality (Abebaw and Haile, 2013) and they are also the main reasons for vertical integration (Carillo, Caracciolo and Cembalo, 2017). Technology and information benefit identified in this study are comparable to several other authors who demonstrated that members of cooperatives have benefitted significantly through the adoption of IPM technology (Ma and Abdulai, 2018), water-saving irrigation technology (Zhang et al., 2019), price information (Mojo, Fischer and Degefa, 2017; Shumeta and D'Haese, 2016), and promotion of the adoption of innovations through efficient information flow (Getnet and Anullo, 2012). More importantly, the technology and information benefits are much better if a cooperative is fully vertically integrated compared to its partial vertical integration.

The fourth important benefit identified in this study is the low-cost input benefit. The cooperatives provide production inputs at a lower than market price to members on cash or credit. This supports the findings of Ünal, Güçlüsoy and Franquesa (2009) who reported that members of agricultural cooperatives in Turkey have recognised that the inputs and services provided to them on credit by their cooperatives have been an important benefit for them. Provisions by cooperatives on credit or at low cost may have helped smallholders who do not have the required operating capital to carry out their farming operations (Bernard and Spielman, 2008). Regardless of the level of vertical integration, low-cost input benefit remains comparable in both partially and fully integrated cooperatives.

Democratic control and education benefit is the fifth group of key benefits identified in this study and are consistent with Mevlüt and Ali (2019) despite the context being different. According to Guttmann (2021), involvement in democratic control is regarded as an important benefit by the members of developed country cooperatives. Democratic control is one of the main principles of traditional cooperatives such as those included in this study. This result, however, contradicts the findings of Alho (2015) who found declining control benefits when a cooperative is more vertically integrated with another downstream firm through contracts. Democratic control and education benefit remain comparable between partially and fully integrated cooperatives and suggest that they are not affected by the level of vertical integration.

However, as outlined in the literature review, environmental benefits were not perceived as important by the members as demonstrated by the results of this study, and this result is consistent with the findings of Mojo, Fischer and Degefa (2015) who found a lack of environmental performance among members in Ethiopian cooperatives. On the contrary, the result contradicts the findings of Bareille, Bonnet-Beaugrand and Duvaleix-Treguer (2017) that found innovative and environmentally friendly farm practices among members of cooperatives in France. This finding suggests the low environmental concern of cooperatives in the rice value chain. Rice is an annual crop (three to four months) and farmers intensify crop management practices such as land preparation and frequent application of fertiliser and agrochemicals to ensure high productivity amidst tight irrigation water schedules.

6. Conclusions

This paper examined if members get better benefits when their cooperatives are more vertically integrated. Accordingly, member benefits of partially and fully integrated cooperatives were analyzed and compared in the rice sector in Sri Lanka. The study identifies five key groups of member benefits including business and financial, livelihood, technology and information, low-cost inputs, and democratic control and education. However, the environmental benefits suggested in the literature were not perceived as important by the members. The study finds that fully integrated cooperatives have significantly better business and financial benefits and suggests that their benefits are mainly driven by economic reasons. Similarly, the technology and information benefits were also found to be better in fully integrated cooperatives compared to partially integrated cooperatives. Livelihood, low-cost input, and democracy and control benefits, on the other hand, are comparable between partially and fully integrated cooperatives. Those benefits are not affected by the level of vertical integration.

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, to our knowledge, it is the first study of this kind that compares two levels of cooperatives' vertical integration, particularly in a staple food grain sector of a developing country in terms of member benefits. Second, this study provides a framework to analyze and compare member benefits of vertically integrated cooperatives. The framework identifies and defines two levels of vertical integration based on the activities of a typical value chain controlled by cooperatives. Third, this study extensively reviewed cooperative member benefits that are widely discussed in the previous literature and presented in a summary table which will be helpful for the researchers.

The results of this study suggest important implications for managers and policymakers in developing countries. First, the promotion of cooperatives' vertical integration in the staple food grain sectors with high concern for quality has the potential to bring better member benefits and add new services. Taking the control of all the activities of the rice value chain from input supply through to the retail of finished consumer products has a better opportunity to provide better benefits to members than controlling a few of the value chain activities and linking producers directly to the customers. The findings of this study can also guide cooperative managers about the value-adding activities that cooperatives should integrate and are of benefit to the members. The results also draw the attention of policymakers and managers regarding the environmental benefits of cooperatives since such benefits appeared less important according to this study. In a context of growing concern for food quality and safety, managers and policymakers should help cooperatives to develop environmental solutions since they are the sources of value in modern agri-food markets.

Even though the results of this research provide important insights, it is not free from some limitations. First, the study included only three cooperatives from each fully and partially integrated group. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the results. Therefore, a future study including a larger sample of cooperatives representing a range of vertical integration levels would produce important results.

The study covered only a single cross-section of data. It did not warrant analyzing the overtime development of vertical integration. In addition, given that cooperatives included in this study represent only rice sector cooperatives, they do not represent most of the cooperatives in other agriculture subsectors. Therefore, undertaking similar studies in other sectors including panel data is another important area of study.

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Entrepreneurial Innovation in a Cooperative Way: the iCOOP KOREA case

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Entrepreneurial Innovation in a Cooperative Way: the iCOOP KOREA case

Abstract

While established later than other consumer cooperative federations in Korea, iCOOP is still considered a cooperative that succeeded in its various management efforts. This study presents the unique path iCOOP paved to succeed while responding to Korea's rapidly changing business environment. This paper considers iCOOP's continuous innovation as the source of its achievements and analyzes it through dynamic capability theory. The findings of this research are as follows: first, since cooperatives operate in a capitalist market context, developing dynamic capabilities for entrepreneurial innovation to respond to changes in the business environment is urgently necessary; second, cooperative identity must be at the center of the evolutionary process, after all a cooperative's main task is not profit maximization but resource optimization (i.e. new ways to use diverse resources and stakeholder capabilities must be actively sought to maximize member benefits); ultimately, innovative resource alignment is only possible when cooperatives have a clear understanding and focus on improving the quality of life of their members.

Keywords: entrepreneurial innovation, cooperative identity, dynamic capability, consumer cooperative, iCOOP

L'innovation entrepreneuriale dans un cadre coopératif : le cas de iCOOP KOREA

Résumé

Bien qu'elle ait été créée plus tard que d'autres fédérations de coopératives de consommateurs en Corée, L'iCOOP est toujours considérée comme une coopérative qui a réussi ses divers efforts de gestion. Cette étude présente le cheminement unique que l'iCOOP a tracé pour réussir tout en répondant à l'évolution rapide de l'environnement commercial de la Corée. Cet article tente d'analyser l'innovation continue, qui est le moteur de développement de l'iCOOP, à travers la théorie des compétences dynamiques. Des résultats de cette recherche sont les suivants ;

Mots-clés: l'innovation entrepreneuriale, Identité des coopératives, capacité dynamique, coopérative de consommateurs, l'iCOOP

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Innovación Empresarial de Forma Cooperativa: el caso de iCOOP KOREA

Resumen

Aunque fue establecido más tarde que las otras federaciones de cooperativas de consumidores en Corea, iCOOP todavía se considera una cooperativa que tuvo éxito en sus diversos esfuerzos de gestión. Este estudio presenta el camino único que pavimentó iCOOP para tener éxito mientras respondía al entorno empresarial cambiando rápidamente en Corea. Este artículo considera la innovación continua de iCOOP como la fuente de sus logros y la analiza a través de la teoría de la capacidad dinámica. Los hallazgos de esta investigación son los siguientes: primero, dado que las cooperativas operan en un contexto de mercado capitalista, es urgentemente necesario desarrollar capacidades dinámicas para que la innovación empresarial responda a los cambios en el entorno empresarial; segundo, la identidad cooperativa debe estar en el centro del proceso evolutivo, después de todo, la tarea principal de una cooperativa no es la maximización de ganancias sino la optimización de recursos (es decir, se deben buscar activamente nuevas formas de utilizar diversos recursos y capacidades de las partes interesadas para maximizar los beneficios de los miembros); en última instancia, la alineación innovadora de recursos solo es posible cuando las cooperativas tienen un claro entendimiento y enfoco en mejorar la calidad de vida de sus miembros.

Palabras clave: innovación empresarial, identidad cooperativa, capacidad dinámica, cooperativa de consumo, iCOOP

1. Introduction

Ever since the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844, various types of cooperatives, each with their own unique paths, have appeared and disappeared across history. Today, surviving cooperatives struggle to conduct business that meets their members' needs while maintaining their organizational identity. The 100+ year old cooperative movement in Korea is no exception. Federations of primary consumer cooperatives started to be established in the late 1980s and have experimented with new business models. Established in the late 1990s, iCOOP KOREA (hereafter iCOOP) would be a cooperative that succeeded in its experimentation. What, then, is the driving force behind iCOOP, which though a latecomer still managed steady growth over the past 30 years? How was iCOOP able to create a unique development path while responding to rapid changes in Korean society and its corresponding changes in the business environment? This study considers the source of iCOOP's growth as continuous innovation efforts and intends to suggest lessons for cooperative management by identifying its innovative characteristics based on the dynamic capability theory.

2. Innovation and dynamic capabilities

Regarded as the ultimate source of corporate growth, innovation involves newly developing and defining products, services, production methods, markets, processes, etc. (Wang and Ahmed, 2007; Fagerberg et al., 2013). Innovation activities in companies require newly applying existing resources or searching for new ones and applying them to products or services. A company's competitive advantage is an important concern for strategic researchers, and effectively carrying out dynamic capabilities is seen as a strategic challenge facing companies that are trying to create valuable products and services (Teece et al., 1997). The resource-based view and evolutionary theories have influenced the formation of dynamic capability concepts. In the resource-based view, resources with VRIN (value, rareness, imitability, non-substitutability) characteristics are key to determining a firm's continued competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). However, this view has been criticized as unable to show how competitive advantage can persist in highly volatile and unpredictable environments (Wang and Ahmed, 2007). In response, evolutionary theory believes that companies have a competitive advantage only when they develop technologies through learning to compete in an unbalanced market (Nelson and Winter, 2002).

Teece et al. (1997), who contributed to defining and spreading the concept of dynamic capability, view the concept as "an organizational and strategic routine for companies to achieve new resource configurations as markets emerge, collide, divide, evolve, and dissipate."[6] In Teece's model (2007), dynamic capabilities consist of three levels of sub-capability.

First of all, the ability to detect and identify opportunities and threats is the capability of a company to constantly scan and search local and distant technologies and markets, to invest in activities that explore customer needs and technological

6 Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) noted that they exhibit commonalities across enterprises that show effective processes although dynamic capabilities are specific and identifiable processes from an enterprise's path-dependent history. Wang and Ahmed (2007) identify the main components of dynamic capabilities as adaptive capability, absorptive capability, and innovative capability.

possibilities, and to develop and settle new and dynamic capabilities beyond existing ones. This capability is developed and accumulated through processes that: implement internal R&D and adopt new technologies; harness innovation from suppliers and supporters and broader science and technology developments; and monitor and verify target segment markets, changing customer demand, and customer innovation.

Secondly, "seizing opportunities" is the capability to address detected opportunities through new products, services, or processes. Such transformation requires large-scale investments, which leads to inflection points in technological and market evolution and entails significant risks. Therefore, the competence and innovativeness of corporate routines, decision-making rules, strategies, and leadership for evaluating new investment opportunities must be supported. This competency builds on the actions of linking customer solutions and business models, adopting corporate boundaries to manage complementary assets and platforms, selecting decision-making protocols, and building loyalty and accountability.

Lastly, "managing threats and reconfiguration" is the ability to reconfigure and rearrange assets and organizational structures as the corporation innovates. Decentralizing authority to maintain flexibility and responsiveness, but maintaining connectedness to activities that must be coordinated, fitting one asset to another, strategies to structures, or strategies to processes, and redesigning structures for governance and knowledge management action constitutes this capability.

This study applies Teece's dynamic capability model to the research subject. This model is suitable for explaining this case study since it not only presents specific elements for analyzing each dynamic capability but also shows the development and settlement of dynamic capabilities within the organization.

At the time of iCOOP's emergence, new consumer cooperatives were emerging in Korea. However, the dominant form had not yet appeared. Since its establishment, iCOOP has constantly challenged itself to create new paths. Considering this, Teece's model is considered appropriate to dynamically show the history in which dynamic capabilities are developed and recreated within an organization. As mentioned above, Teece's dynamic capability model consists of the abilities to: detect and identify opportunities and threats; convert detected opportunities into new products, services, processes; and reorganize and rearrange assets and organizational structures to meet innovation. Using this model, this study focuses on identifying iCOOP's unique characteristics.

3. History and current status of iCOOP

Founded in 1997, by the end of 2021, iCOOP had grown into a coalition organization with 310,568 members (299,879 monthly dues-paying members),[7] a KRW 650.3

7 In addition to the initial investment paid when becoming a member, iCOOP members accumulate a small amount of investment each time a member makes a purchase. Furthermore, after the establishment of the federation, iCOOP introduced the monthly membership dues system to cover the operating expense for primary cooperatives. At first, each primary cooperative independently decided whether to apply the membership dues policy to its members, so there were still members who did not pay dues among members. Currently, the system is mandatory.

billion in turnover, 100 primary co-ops, and 253 stores. From 2005 to 2015, its members and turnover rapidly increased: members increased 14-fold; its turnover, about 9-fold. Since then, both have grown steadily (Figure 1).

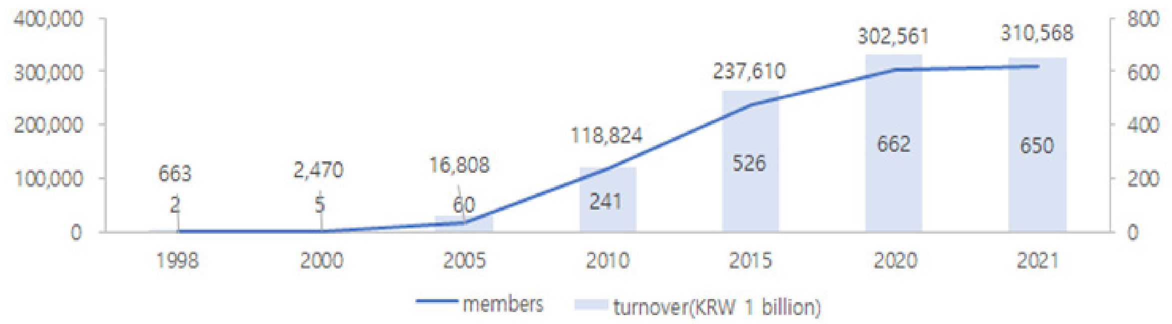

Figure 1. iCOOP's annual membership size and turnover

iCOOP's history can be roughly divided into two periods shaped by different strategies before and after 2004. The first period (1997-2003) was one of "stabilization of management through centralization of businesses." At that time, small-scale consumer cooperatives in Korea conducted business by selling eco-friendly agricultural products in stores through direct transactions with farms. However, they struggled with financial difficulties as they had to individually select suppliers, collect goods, manage members, and run stores. In 1997, six primary cooperatives began joint logistics, and in the following year, the 21st Century Consumer Co-operatives (currently iCOOP) was established to overcome these difficulties (Korean Solidarity of Consumer Co-operatives , 2009).[8] The most important task of this period was to ensure that each cooperative could operate and sustain itself. Therefore, while the federation (iCOOP) operated the logistics of the primary cooperatives to promote management efficiency, the primary cooperatives focused on recruiting and communicating with members. If some primary cooperatives grew too large, they were split into smaller cooperatives ("business centralization and organization differentiation" strategy). This was supported by the monthly membership dues system (Korean Solidarity of Consumer Co-operatives, 2009).

The second period (after 2004) was characterized by "strengthening food safety and business growth". Korea's modern consumer cooperatives started by promoting the distribution of eco-friendly foods in order to benefit farmers, consumers, and the environment. Enhancing food safety during this second period was especially important due to a series of incidents involving the mixing of agricultural products and raw materials between 2003 and 2004. With this, iCOOP began designing a new system to secure food safety and members' trust. Established to strengthen food safety in the distribution process, the iCOOP Certification Center examines the entire process from production to distribution to consumption. In addition, an Eco-friendly Organic Food Cluster ("Natural Dream Park") was promoted to strengthen food safety throughout the production process and to secure a stable production base. Furthermore, PB product development got underway in earnest to raise food safety standards, and stores were opened in each

8 Currently iCOOP

region for members' convenience (Korean Solidarity of Consumer Co-operatives, 2008). As a result, the management of primary cooperatives was stabilized, and the number of members increased steadily.[9]

4. Understanding iCOOP's dynamic capabilities

4.1 Identifying member needs and detecting threats

4.1.1 Primary cooperatives autonomy and primary-federation communication

According to the mutual incentive theory, member participation can be promoted by shared values, shared purpose, and a sense of community rather than through individual rewards and punishments (Birchall and Simmons, 2004). A cooperative accumulates knowledge in the community from cooperation in the process of achieving the needs and desires of its members and utilizes the collective knowledge it possesses to conduct business (Jung and Choi, 2017). In iCOOP, member needs are identified not only through surveys or feedback (via member complaints or after-sales service) but also through members' participation in decision-making and through communication systems.

Representatives of each primary cooperative discuss current issues of business and activities and suggest members' opinions at regional councils every month. These opinions and resolutions are discussed by the federation's board of directors every month, and mutual communication on major issues in business and activities takes on a regular basis.[10] Prior to the federation's general assembly, project evaluations and the next business plans are discussed at regional councils and then submitted to the general assembly agenda through the federation's board of directors (iCOOP Co-operative Institute, 2018). In addition, various communication channels gather the current status and opinions of primary co-ops. Through various committees at the federation level, such as the Products Committee and the Member Relationship Management (MRM) Committee, the current status and opinions of primary cooperatives across the country on related activities are gathered and form the basis for the continued resolutions that set the direction for iCOOP. Meanwhile, iCOOP has conducted a member survey ("iCOOP Members' Consumption Pattern and Attitude Survey") every three years since 2006 to engage with and better understand the needs of its members (Ji, 2021). A multi-layered and multi-faceted communication system enables primary cooperatives to share values and goals by engaging them in practical decision-making.

4.1.2 Coping with crises in the supply chain and external environment

Modern companies regard supply chain management (SCM) as a very critical factor in corporate success. The most important factor in successful supply chain management is cooperation between multiple actors (Park et al., 2018). Rather than relying on individual trustworthiness, iCOOP has systematically established a

9 The TV documentary "How to Eat and Live Well" (SBS Special) aired in 2002, and the opposition to US beef imports (2006) and the melamine crisis (2008) raised public awareness of and interest in food safety and consumer cooperatives. The melamine scandal involved the detection of melamine in Chinese dairy products, causing food products from all over the world to be put on alert, becoming a hot topic in Korea.

10 The federation's board of directors is composed of representatives of regional councils.

reliable network by building cooperative supply chains and communicating with members. When Korean eco-friendly agriculture started, consumer cooperatives relied on personal trust with producers, with some of the cooperatives having been formed under the initiative of agricultural producers (Jeong, 2006). In some ways, this made it difficult to detect crises or seize opportunities. In traditional supply chain management, suppliers and buyers are viewed as competitors: buyers seek bargaining power to minimize purchasing costs, and suppliers opportunistically seek short-term profits. Having emerged from a need to provide safe food amidst a market compromised by short-term contractual relationships and a need to improve Korean agriculture, Korean consumer cooperatives had developed a producer-friendly stance through contract production-joint purchase. However, the limitations of the transaction relationship based on trust in individual producers was clear. In fact, most of iCOOP's crises were in the supply chain, with many problems related to producers (farmers) and eco-friendly processed food producers.

So, in iCOOP, supply chain problems are notified to members through various communication channels, and are dealt with through extraordinary general meetings, discussions, policy workshops, and working-level cooperation meetings depending on the case.[11] Accordingly, in order to check the production sites from the perspective of the members, member activists such as the Product Committee used to conduct inspection activities on the sites.[12] In addition, to prevent such problems, a system was created to promote food safety across the whole supply chain from primary production to processing to distribution to consumption.

4.1.3 Transformational business leadership

Organizational leaders should be able to articulate and convincingly present to their members a vision of their organization that will change through innovation and possess the drive to overcome challenges arising in the adoption or implementation of innovation (Hong, 2010). In particular, transformational leadership is a leadership that presents a long-term vision and encourages members to achieve their vision, and it is an intellectual stimulus that rouses awareness of problem-solving in a new direction (Chah et al., 2008; Kang, 2010). The management of iCOOP has played a central role in continuously proposing new strategies and business policies, sharing them with employees, consumer members, and other stakeholders, building consensus around these strategies and policies and then implementing them. While influencing the organization's innovative atmosphere and behavior with change-oriented leadership (Hong, 2010), these transformational business leaders have played an important role in developing the competency to capture new opportunities and engage in innovative activities.

iCOOP understood the need for routine business decisions and implementation to be carried out quickly by management. In this sense, members' participation in decision-making is an important factor

11 For example, in 2004, when the mixing incident of the food products, which was a supplier, occurred, two extraordinary general assembly meetings, four extraordinary board meetings, and 14 member discussions were held to actively communicate with members. The members decided to discontinue the items due to repeated accidents, and at that time, 80 of the 400 items were discontinued (Korean Solidarity of Consumer Co-operatives, 2005).

12 In addition to commodity trading, consumer cooperatives in Korea have carried out many projects in which agricultural producers and urban consumer members jointly participate, such as experiencing production sites, labor help, etc. to form and maintain cooperative relationships (Chae, 2013).

that enables transformational leadership. This is because common visions and goals can be set and, if necessary, discussed through a multi-layered communication system. Thus, various decisions in management and activities can be organically linked.

4.2 Establishing a member-oriented business model

4.2.1 A certification system which manages the entire process from production to consumption

The newly designed business model in the second phase was to address members' common needs for food safety. To this end, iCOOP developed a certification system that compares the total amount of production and the total amount of distribution in real time, expanding the certification system to the entire process from agricultural production to distribution. The iCOOP Certification System (called Distribution Certification System at the time of its launch in 2005) is a unique and significant certification system that contributes to food safety and environmental conservation by ensuring that the entire process (from production, to distribution and consumption) for organic agricultural products meets its criteria of safety, circulation, biodiversity, animal welfare, reliability, and sustainability.[13] Since 2020, the system has been expanded and revised in consideration of the health and well-being of its members (iCOOP Healing Federation, 2021). The iCOOP Certification System is a mechanism for realizing food safety, sustainability, and consumer health in connection with one another, and functions as a policy that enables a series of processes from production to consumption to be mutually specialized and harmonious.

4.2.2 Building up organic food clusters and controlling industrial platforms

Establishing an eco-friendly food cluster is a way to: prevent instability due to economic vulnerability and the lack of scale of processing producers; secure reliable production processes; and maximize the synergy of integrating processing into one geographically close cluster (Shin, 2011). As part of its business model innovation, iCOOP has established a cooperative system among partners through platforms called clusters. In accordance with the strategy of "business centralization and organization differentiation," a focus is selected, but other cooperatives or social enterprises are established for the rest to build up a structural cooperative relationship. In addition, processing producers, who previously had only trading or OEM relationships, moved factories to the cluster and participated in the investment in the cluster together with agricultural producers, consumer members, employees, or primary cooperatives. Through iCOOP's proposed clusters, the new partnership among the various stakeholders can satisfy member needs and increase the welfare of agricultural or processing producers.

The clusters and iCOOP Certification System enabled iCOOP to enhance its management capabilities in the production, processing, and distribution process from primary agricultural production to final consumer members. This means that high-quality goods can be delivered to members. Based on this, iCOOP launched its own "Natural Dream" brand, and developed various processed foods to integrate the needs of a wide range of members and the stable

13 iCOOP Certification System has played a role in preventing illegal mixing of agricultural products, developing a traceability system, managing production processes, and granting of iCOOP certification marks in order to supply members with goods that meet production standards.

consumption of agricultural products.[14]

4.2.3 Enhancing commitment and loyalty through increased member engagement

iCOOP seeks to enhance the commitment and loyalty of stakeholders as well as members through their increased participation. Among its stakeholders, iCOOP considers its employees, suppliers, and farmers as the most important. Because it believes that it is critical to strengthen the autonomy of primary cooperatives by raising the competency of its members (Korean Solidarity of Consumer Co-operatives, 2009), it focuses on educating members and training member activists. Educational programs targeting members or created by themselves, such as the education for board members[15] have been broadly organized and implemented at various levels such as local, regional, and federation. Meanwhile, iCOOP has also created capital raising systems to promote the responsibility and economic participation of members, such as Monthly Membership Dues, Responsible Investment Movement, and Member's Advanced Fund Account for Stable Farming. iCOOP provided goods with the concept of cost without a margin to members through the membership dues system, providing an opportunity for more people to use iCOOP, resulting in an increase in the amount of use for each member.[16] Moreover, the dues system allowed primary cooperatives to reduce concerns about operating costs and focus on members' activities.

Farmer's Coop[17] and consumer's primary cooperatives are significant spaces for training members into leaders and changing customers into owners (Shin, 2011). iCOOP KOREA tried to find and maintain the size of its membership so as to facilitate member participation. When the membership of a primary cooperative reaches a certain size, it is split into a new cooperative to facilitate the autonomy of the cooperative by strengthening its members' activities. In addition, iCOOP believed that there is a limit to the ability of employees to develop their autonomous competency as an employee, and tried to realize labor based on worker ownership. In the early days, iCOOP tried to form an employee cooperative or make it a worker-owned enterprise when a specific function of iCOOP or Farmer's Coop was differentiated.[18] Through these various devices, consumers, producers, and employees become owners of their organizations and achieve a higher sense of belonging.[19]

14 At the extraordinary general meeting In July 2004, iCOOP adopted the "review and supplementation of production policy and commodity policy." Through this review, iCOOP launched the store business as its own brand called "Natural Dream" in 2006. In addition, iCOOP has developed its own new products in earnest. Previously, iCOOP's products were mainly supplied online under the producer brand, which was a joint brand of consumer cooperatives in Korea.

15 iCOOP educates the directors of primary cooperatives about the policies of iCOOP, and principles of democratic organizational management, and grants them qualifications to complete the curriculum. From 2008 to 2021, 1,666 directors across the country completed this training program for a total of 22 sessions.

16 The membership dues policy is a system in which members equally share the operating expenses of their own primary cooperatives every month, and it is one way to realize cost management. The amount of membership dues varies depending on the size of the members of each primary cooperative. As of 2021, members are paying around KRW 10,000 per month. The membership due system has the effect of reducing inactive members by encouraging members to purchase goods from iCOOP as much as possible so as to get more return for their membership fee. The membership dues are also a key financial resource for the cooperative solidarity fund to prepare for risks and disasters, such as the Price Stabilization Fund, the Store Cooperation Fund, and the Activist Fund. At the same time, it is a core financial resource for various public interest campaigns.

17 A social cooperative established by agricultural producers in partnership in iCOOP.

4.3 Stakeholder engagement and mutual learning

4.3.1 Network organizational structure and decentralization

For an organization to survive in fast-paced environments, it must "increase in fitness and reproduce much faster than others". Therefore, "organizational units should have considerable autonomy but remain connected to activities that must be coordinated" (Simon, 2002; Teece, 2007). iCOOP is decentralizing decision-making and enhancing its capacity to coordinate between organizational units including agricultural and processing producers and employees through SAPENet, which was newly launched in 2018, thereby increasing their autonomy and responsibility.[20] Of course, key decisions about business and activities are made through the general assembly and the board of directors, composed of representatives of regional councils. In addition, within the regular multi-layered consultation systems such as committees by field, regional councils, and SAPENet working-level cooperation meetings, opinions are collected and resolutions and specific strategies for the implementation of the decided issues are created and shared (iCOOP Co-operative Institute, 2018).

4.3.2 Practical learning based on collaboration

One of the important things in organizational communication capabilities and innovation is information sharing with organizational members. Established in 2002, iCOOP's intranet facilitates the exchange of information and business statuses so that stakeholders can understand the flow and direction of core policies and operations.

Such exchange helps to develop multi-level resolutions and strategies. The intranet also functions as a platform supporting the coordination of opinions and business cooperation in operations. The intranet system is used among the consumption sector, the production sector, and the cooperative enterprise sector, which constitute SAPENet. Through this, they each promote flexible work cooperation based on projects and make practical learning a daily routine.

At the same time, each primary cooperative holds a meeting between the directors of the primary cooperative and the executives of the Federation by selecting the iCOOP policy topics that they are interested in. In this way, a mutual understanding can be reached between the alliance's policy and the day-to-day issues of the primary cooperatives. The Management Academy has also been conducted since 2017 to help employees understand SAPENet's business direction and strategy. In addition, it establishes a new

18 Employees had even attempted to create cooperatives in which all employees participate, but it was difficult for all employees to create one cooperative, such as the problem of location and distance. Afterwards, when creating new enterprises in federation and industrial clusters, employees are trying to take the lead in investment and operation.

19 One of the indicators that offer a glimpse into members' trust is borrowing from members. The members' loan, which started in the process of overcoming a fire loss at the logistics center in 2001, has established itself as one of iCOOP's representative self-help finances.

20 SAPENet refers to the network for a sustainable society and a people-centered economy. The network is an interconnected system of many people and various organizations, which consists of iCOOP Group (a group of consumer members), Farmer's COOP Group (related to agricultural producers), SAPENet Enterprises for cooperatives (composed mainly of processing producers), and various NPOs and social economy organizations.

vision of SAPENet and conducts periodic policy workshops to raise managers' competence, to share directions, and to seek effective implementation measures. Ultimately, such systems (which provide diverse stakeholders' multi-layered discussion systems, search for resolutions, coordination of opinion, and cooperation processes) display the characteristics of a "living lab," which weighs "user initiative" and "fields" in terms of participation, attempts, and co-creation.[21]

5. Conclusion

By applying Teece's model, iCOOP's dynamic capabilities were revealed as: identifying member needs and detecting threats; building member-oriented business models; stakeholder engagement and mutual learning (see Figure 2). These results reveal that while iCOOP, like other companies, has constantly evolved various innovations in organizational and business management to respond to changes in the business environment, it has also worked to maintain its cooperative identity.

The following lessons can be derived from this study. First, since cooperatives operate in the market, developing dynamic capabilities for entrepreneurial innovation to respond to changes in the business environment is an urgent necessity. iCOOP has continuously explored and actively introduced the most suitable organizational structure, products, and supply methods to realize the needs and aspirations of not only consumer members but also other stakeholders. By understanding the characteristics of cooperatives' own businesses and markets, cooperatives must also continuously develop their competencies to achieve innovation in organizational structure, operating methods, products, services, etc. And to develop these competencies, the role of entrepreneurial managers is important.

Second, the cooperative identity must be at the center of the evolutionary process. iCOOP relied on a system in which the needs and aspirations of members and their democratic and economic participation were taken into account while developing entrepreneurial innovations and capabilities to respond to environmental changes. The direct trading system of eco-friendly agricultural products, the membership dues policy for self-help and self-responsibility, the certification system for safe food distribution, and the establishment of expanded supply chains and clusters were the means to realize its member-focused approach.

Cooperatives, which are not immune to social changes such as aging, population decline, and ever more frequent crises, are required to play an active role as the main agent in resolving social problems. iCOOP declared "Heal and Restore" as the new identity of the Natural Dream brand by recognizing a shift in the needs of members amidst rapid social change and re-affirming its expanded mission and vision in food safety (iCOOP Consumer Activities, 2020). This means members will be able to realize healthy lives by meeting their lifelong needs, such as care and leisure through the cooperative economy. Accordingly, iCOOP continues to practice for the health of people and

21 "Living Labs refers to a user-centered, open innovation ecosystem based on a systematic user co-creation approach integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings (ENoLL, 2015)." European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) considers the following five elements as essential elements of Living Lab. ① Active user involvement, ② real-life setting, ③ multi-stakeholder participation, ④ various methodological approaches, and ⑤ co-creation.

nature through its integrated value production and consumption chain, built up over more than 20 years. Representative examples include the life care activities that actively take care of members' health and the climate change response actions that shape

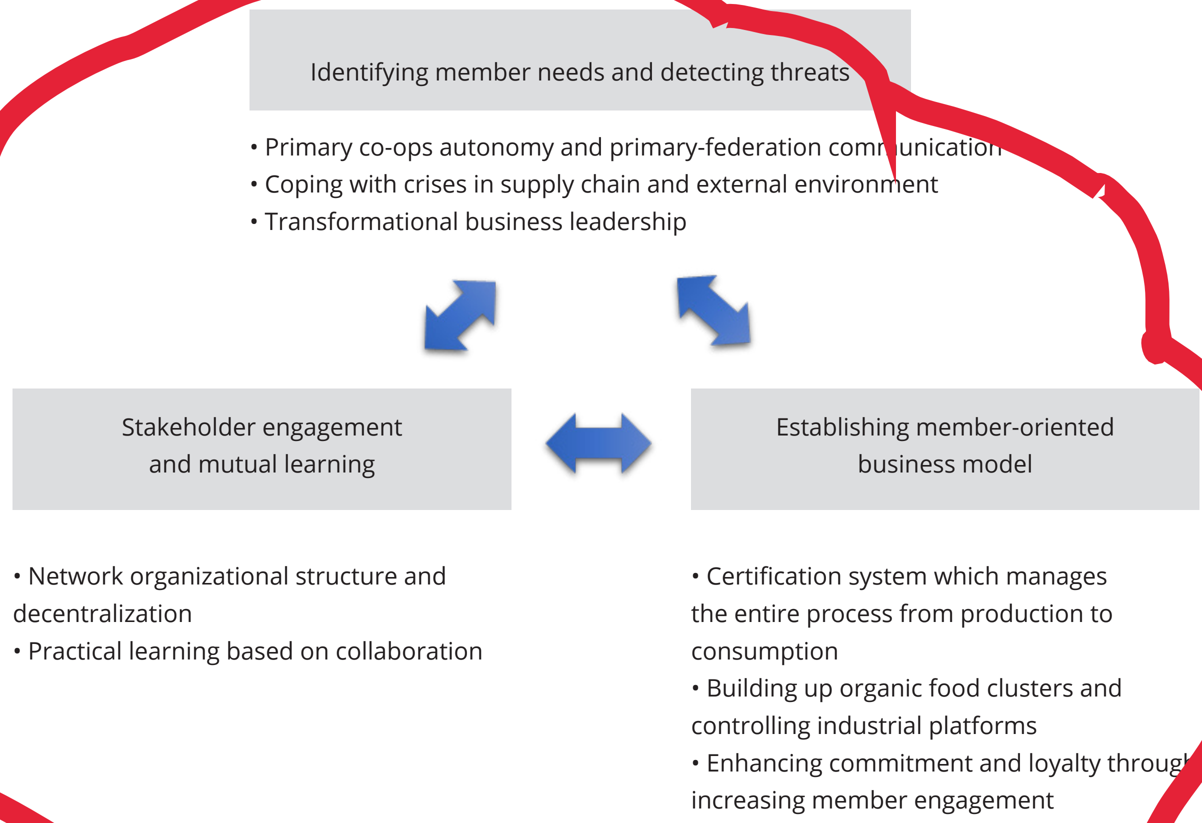

Figure 2. Dynamic Capability Model of iCOOP

implementation through iCOOP's eco-friendly production and consumption activities.

The commitment and practices of the diverse stakeholders are reflected here as well. Farmer's COOP is developing a farming method that encompasses organic farming, no-till farming, and utilizing ion minerals and soil microorganisms, which leads to carbon reduction in primary agricultural production.[22] SAPENet Enterprises for Cooperatives in the clusters are producing processed foods for the healing and restoration of members and developing innovative technology to reduce the use of plastics in processing and product packaging. Along with these product developments, iCOOP grants members environmental mileage to increase the recovery rate of recyclable packaging materials and raise awareness of climate change response actions.

22 By encouraging Natural Dream farming (carbon farming) using soil microorganisms, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is transferred to soil microorganisms to fertilize the soil and reduce carbon emissions in the production process. Carbon Healing Agriculture means being helpful for human health and restoration of nature by increasing the mineral content of food and reducing carbon emissions, breaking away from practices of organic farming in Korea, which has only emphasized not using pesticides and fertilizers.

Through their consumption of Natural Dream goods, members are able to partake in iCOOP's efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Furthermore, they improve their health with restored mineral content foods while participating in carbon reduction activities. In addition, they participate in various activities such as the No Plastic Campaign along with Consumers for Climate Action.[23] iCOOP is implementing innovation and reallocating capabilities and assets through complementary cooperation with other stakeholders to meet its members' needs and that of those in society who want a healthy life and resolution of the climate crisis. This can be seen as a process of supporting evolutionary fitness that helps heal citizens and the environment beyond food safety through a cooperative system among partners built as a cluster platform.

Management innovation of cooperatives implies social innovation. When it comes to the demands of the market, there is no significant difference between the level of competitiveness demanded from capital-oriented enterprises and from cooperatives. However, both can differ in who creates and how to create competitiveness. Resource optimization rather than profit maximization is the main task of cooperatives. To maximize member benefits, new ways to use diverse resources and stakeholder capabilities must be actively sought. This kind of resource alignment is only possible when cooperatives have a clear understanding and focus on improving the quality of life of their members (Parnell, 2011).

While this study identified the innovative characteristics of a cooperative, which is a business and an association, through a case study of iCOOP, it is limited since its results could not be generalized through a comparison with other cooperatives. More lessons can be derived by comparing innovation across the various types of Korean cooperatives.

23 Consumers of Climate Action, which is a non-profit organization in SAPENet with a mission to create a sustainable society, conducts campaigns with consumers and the public across the country, and calls for policies to promote sustainable change.

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How Does Institutional Change in Cooperatives Occur? Fair Trade in iCOOP Consumer Cooperative[1]

Sunhwa Kim[2] and Seungkwon Jang[3]

How Does Institutional Change in Cooperatives Occur? Fair Trade in iCOOP Consumer Cooperative

Abstract

This study analyzes how cooperatives introduce and expand new practices that conflict with existing institutions. Consumer cooperatives in Korea have institutionalized the consumption of eco-friendly organic food produced in Korea through solidarity with domestic producers. Therefore, handling imported Fair Trade food in the organizational field of consumer cooperatives was a new practice that caused tension with the existing institution. This study analyzed the kind of institutional work iCOOP consumer cooperative has been doing to introduce and expand Fair Trade practice. This case revealed four types of institutional work in the iCOOP consumer cooperative: identity, routinization, network, and reflection. Fair Trade has been accepted and expanded through various types of institutional work containing the intentions and efforts of consumer cooperative business units, federations, primary cooperatives, and activist members. However, due to the conflict with the existing institution, the Fair Trade practice was formed as a secondary practice, not a core practice of consumer cooperatives. This study shows that when introducing a practice that conflicts with existing institutions, it can only work in organizational and organizational fields if the institutional work of various actors accompanies it. In particular, this suggests that for the institutional change of cooperatives, which are businesses and associations, institutional works of various actors such as primary cooperatives and activist members, as well as business parts and associations, must be accompanied. In this study, the institution is not fixed but could be changed through various types of institutional work containing the intentions and efforts of the actors.

Keywords: institutional change, institutional work, cooperatives, Fair Trade, iCOOP consumer cooperative

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Comment se produit le changement institutionnel dans les coopératives ? Commerce équitable dans la coopérative de consommateurs iCOOP

Résumé

Cette étude analyse comment les coopératives introduisent et étendent de nouvelles pratiques qui entrent en conflit avec les institutions existantes. Les coopératives de consommateurs en Corée ont institutionnalisé la consommation d'aliments biologiques respectueux de l'environnement produits en Corée par solidarité avec les producteurs nationaux. Par conséquent, la gestion des aliments importés du commerce équitable dans le domaine organisationnel des coopératives de consommateurs était une nouvelle pratique qui a provoqué des tensions avec l'institution existante. Cette étude a analysé le type de travail institutionnel que la coopérative de consommateurs iCOOP a effectué pour introduire et développer des pratiques qui entrent en conflit avec l'institution existante. Ce cas a révélé quatre types de travail institutionnel dans la coopérative de consommateurs iCOOP : identité, routinisation, réseau et réflexion. Le commerce équitable a été accepté et étendu à travers divers types de travaux institutionnels contenant les intentions et les efforts des unités commerciales des coopératives de consommateurs, des fédérations, des coopératives primaires et des membres militants. Cependant, en raison du conflit avec l'institution existante, la pratique du commerce équitable a été formée comme une pratique secondaire, et non comme une pratique de base des coopératives de consommateurs. Cette étude montre que lors de l'introduction d'une pratique qui entre en conflit avec les institutions existantes, elle ne peut fonctionner dans les champs organisationnels et organisationnels que si le travail institutionnel de divers acteurs l'accompagne. En particulier, cela suggère que pour le changement institutionnel des coopératives, qui sont des entreprises et des associations, divers acteurs tels que les coopératives primaires et les membres militants, ainsi que les parties d'entreprises et les associations, doivent être accompagnés. Dans cette étude, l'institution n'est pas figée mais peut être modifiée à travers différents types de travaux institutionnels contenant les intentions et les efforts des acteurs.

Mots clés: changement institutionnel, travail institutionnel, coopératives, commerce équitable, coopérative de consommateurs iCOOP

¿Cómo Se Produce el Cambio Institucional en las Cooperativas? Comercio Justo en Cooperativa de Consumo iCOOP

Resumen

Este estudio analiza cómo las cooperativas introducen y expanden nuevas prácticas que entran en conflicto con las instituciones existentes. Las cooperativas de consumidores en Corea han institucionalizado el consumo de alimentos orgánicos ecológicos producidos en Corea a través de la solidaridad con los productores nacionales. Por lo tanto, el manejo de alimentos importados de Comercio Justo en el ámbito organizativo de las cooperativas de consumo era una práctica nueva que generaba tensión con la institución existente. Este estudio analizó el tipo de trabajo institucional que ha estado realizando la cooperativa de consumidores iCOOP para introducir y expandir prácticas que entran en conflicto con la institución existente. Este caso reveló cuatro tipos de trabajo institucional en la cooperativa de consumo iCOOP: identidad, rutinización, red y reflexión. El Comercio Justo ha sido aceptado y ampliado a través de varios tipos de trabajo institucional que contienen las intenciones y los esfuerzos de las unidades comerciales de cooperativas de consumo, federaciones, cooperativas primarias y miembros activistas. Sin embargo, debido al conflicto con la institución existente, la práctica del Comercio Justo se formó como una práctica secundaria, no como una práctica central de las cooperativas de consumo. Este estudio muestra que al introducir una práctica que entra en conflicto con las instituciones existentes, solo puede funcionar en los campos organizativos y organizacionales si la acompaña el trabajo institucional de diversos actores. En particular, esto sugiere que para el cambio institucional de las cooperativas, que son empresas y asociaciones, se debe acompañar a diversos actores, como cooperativas primarias y miembros activistas, así como partes empresariales y asociaciones. En este estudio, la institución no es fija sino que puede ser cambiada a través de varios tipos de trabajo institucional que contienen las intenciones y esfuerzos de los actores.

Palabras clave: cambio institucional, trabajo institucional, cooperativas, Comercio Justo, cooperativa de consumo iCOOP

1. Introduction

Korean consumer cooperatives that emerged in the 1980s have supplied their members with eco-friendly organic food produced in Korea. While providing safe food to consumers, they also support stable production for producers with local food and eco-friendly organic farming, which has been continuously spread (Shin, 2013, p. 26).

The Korean consumer cooperatives have constituted their institutions by forming an organizational field based on the four federations. An institution refers to a shared semantic structure derived from collective cognition or a shared understanding of the world (Suddaby, Seidl, and Le, 2013). Institutions are collections of material and symbolic practices organized into principles that provide a logic of action for the individuals and organizations that reproduce them (Glynn and Lounsbury, 2005). Actors actively reinterpret the practice for each situational context and give it a new meaning, changing it appropriately to the situation and performing it. It constructs a complex social order through continuous flexible practice (Chia and MacKay, 2007; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

Korean consumer cooperatives are jointly owned businesses, democratically controlled and economically active autonomous associations in which members make rules and manage themselves autonomously. Based on the definition of a cooperative as satisfying members' needs, the institutions have been structured in the Korean context.

From the beginning, they aimed to build an environment where safe 'domestic' food could be produced and consumed (Jeong, 2012, p. 306). Institutional similarity has been formed by expanding the production and distribution of domestic organic food with various stakeholders such as associations, primary cooperatives, producers, and partner companies. These activities have become guidelines for behavior and legitimacy in the organizational field.

Due to the focus on the domestic food, consumer cooperatives could not handle some items that were not domestically produced, such as sugar, even if members requested them. Some consumer cooperatives in Korea, which have emphasized solidarity with domestic producers, have started Fair Trade to expand their solidarity with farmers in developing countries. (Kim, 2012; Kim and Jang, 2018; Kim and Shin, 2021a, p. 2).

However, the concept and practices of Fair Trade were not easily accepted in the organizational field of consumer cooperatives. In the case of iCOOP consumer cooperative federation (iCOOP), the principle for handling Fair Trade products is defined as 'items that are not produced in Korea or their self-sufficiency rate falls below 3% in Korea' (iCOOP, 2020). The complementary role to domestic products is also revealed in the proportion of sales. Whereas iCOOP sells the largest share of Fair Trade products among organizations established in Korea, the proportion of Fair Trade sales accounts for about 2% of its total sales in 2021 (SAPENet, 2022).

This study aims to examine the Fair Trade practice of iCOOP. The acceptance of Fair Trade has been in conflict with their normative values in consumer cooperatives that have focused on producing and consuming domestic eco-friendly agricultural products. As a result, even if the organization accepted it, it was not easily expanded. Therefore, intentional actions have been taken by various actors to maintain and develop Fair Trade practices.

In this study, we aim to evaluate how these dynamics of change have happened and who is responsible for accepting and

expanding new practices that conflict with the existing institutional norms. Based on the theoretical framework on institutional change (Dacin et al. 2002), this study aims to examine the institutional work undertaken by cooperatives when introducing and expanding practices that conflict with the existing institutions. The study will explore how the interplay of institutional factors, cooperative characteristics, and actors' efforts influence the creation or alteration of practices. By identifying the types of institutional work carried out by cooperatives, this study seeks to shed light on the mechanisms through which institutional change occurs in cooperative organizations.

2. Institutional change

This study uses the perspective of institutional work in the current research flow of sociological neo-institutionalism developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1991, pp. 23-24) to explain the interaction between action and institution. Since then, various concepts have emerged under the sociological neo-institutionalist perspective, and the understanding on the relationship between institutions and actions has also changed.

The neo-institutional theory has developed to explain institutional isomorphism that cannot be explained by competition pressure or efficiency. Organizational and individual actors were assumed to be passively adapted to institutions, and human behavior was regarded as habitual and repetitive. In addition, institutions are seen as constraints outside the organization and human agency, that shape the behavior of organizational actors, and the agency is regarded as secondary in response to institutional pressures (Battilana and D'aunno, 2009).

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) questioned this approach and reused a practice perspective on the relationship between action and institution initially introduced by DiMaggio and Powell (1991, pp. 23–24). A practice perspective emphasizes that rules and norms do not ultimately constrain behavior, nor does it possess an infinite capacity to invent new institutional arrangements.

This study uses the concept of institutional work suggested by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006, pp. 215-254). Institutional work is defined as the purposeful actions of actors to create, maintain, and disrupt institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 215). Institutions are products of human actions and reactions. Individual interests and agendas motivate institutional change or preservation (Lawrence et al., 2009). This perspective pays attention to the 'institutionalization process' itself, not the institution's outcome (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2009). Institutional works are how organizational actors engage in other institutional actions and how those actions interact with strategies and their organizational structures (Phillips and Lawrence, 2012). Institutions are perceived as contingent structures and as emergent processes. To understand how organizational structures actually work, we need to pay attention to what people habitually do in our daily lives (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 219). Firms can be theorized from the perspective of the individuals residing within them (Suddaby et al., 2013, p. 338). Institutions exist, sustain, and evolve through the interactions and practices of actors in everyday life (McCarthy, 2015).

The creation and change of institutions depend on institutional work performed by actors within the organizational field. However, unintended results may appear different from those initially devised by actors (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Studies from this perspective include understanding the circumstances in which actors are involved in institutional work and the factors that support or hinder the practice. Some actors engage in institutional work through deliberate efforts and methods, while others do not. This study tries to reveal the invisible things that actors try daily, such as adjustment, adaptation, and compromise. It conducted case studies to understand the practical actions of individual and organizational actors to create, maintain, and disrupt institutions and to examine empirical contexts across sectors, geographic boundaries, and time frames (Lawrence et al., 2009).

There are three key elements of institutional work. First, it focuses on individual and collective actors' awareness, skills, and reflection. Second, attention is paid to the conscious behavior of individuals and collective actors who maintain, engage, and change the institution. Third, the practices leading to innovation are embedded in existing institutions and depend on resources and technologies in the field in which they occur (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

Institutional work can be understood as the physical and mental effort made within an institution. In institutional work, the concept of work means intentionality and effort (Lawrence et al., 2011). Institutions can be affected without intention, but that is not institutional work (Lawrence et al., 2009, pp. 12-13). Efforts vary in degree and type and offer a variety of behavioral patterns that can be recognized as institutional work.

Institutional work emphasizes agency and expands the concept of agency. Agency refers to habits and practices that allow individuals to enrich their reflective understanding to maintain institutions. Moreover, it refers to the continued activity of responding strategically within the institutional context embedded in the actors (Lawrence et al., 2009). Actors can maintain and strengthen institutions daily without perceiving that they are socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In institutional work, actors have limited reflexivity on their relationship with the social structure they have constructed. A high level of cognitive effort is required for actors to perceive institutions as social constructs rather than natural ones. These efforts imply the potential for questioning various routines and assumptions and the possibility of institutional change (Lawrence et al., 2009).

3. iCOOP and Fair Trade

In order to examine and evaluate the process of introducing and expanding a new practice that conflicts with the institution, iCOOP case was studied. iCOOP is a federation established by primary consumer cooperatives that focuses on supplying its members with safe food produced in Korea (Yeom, 2018, p. 18). Since Fair Trade started in 2007, iCOOP has actively carried out education and campaigns to spread awareness about Fair Trade and the consumption of Fair Trade products. Among the organizations established in Korea, iCOOP has the largest quantity of sales and the most diverse range of Fair Trade products. It is also active in developing processed Fair Trade foods. Recently, primary cooperatives of iCOOP in the metropolitan area actively participated in the Fair Trade Towns Movement (Kim and Shin, 2021a). [Table 1] summarizes information on iCOOP and Fair Trade. iCOOP has 100 primary cooperatives nationwide, and about 300,000 members pay monthly dues. Total sales are about 650 billion won, and Fair Trade accounts for about 2% of total iCOOP sales.

This study used a qualitative research method, focusing on categorizing the actors' institutional work - how the actors' actions interact with the institution (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). This study analyzes the iCOOP case as a process of

introducing and expanding Fair Trade in Korea. The period that this study analyzes is from 2007, when iCOOP introduced Fair Trade, to 2019. The scope of observations focused on activities related to Fair Trade.

Table 1. iCOOP and Fair Trade

Name	Year of Establishment	Number of Primary coops	Number of Stores	Number of Members	Sales
iCOOP (Fair Trade)	1998 (2007)	100	253	approximately 300,000 people	650.3 billion won (11.75 billion won)

Source: SAPENet (2022).

4. Institutional change in iCOOP

In this study, open coding was used to identify and categorize related concepts of data according to the qualitative data analysis method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Concepts were organized through extraction, disassembly, and connection of the collected data. It was found that iCOOP KOREA carried out four different institutional works in introducing and expanding Fair Trade. We extracted the salient attributes of the institutional works and conceptualized the phenomenon by naming it.

4.1 Identity Work

Organizational identities shape the understanding of who can legally undertake what practices (Gawer and Phillips, 2013). Organizational members understand practices through the prism of their organizational identity. When trying to introduce a new practice that conflicts with the existing system, actors take action to modify the organizational identity. iCOOP adjusts the tension between the existing institution and newly introduced Fair Trade practices and introduces Fair Trade through identity work that make Fair Trade part of the organization's identity.

Tensions between new practices and existing institutions are eased. Within the field of Korean consumer cooperatives, there was an opinion against importing food for reasons such as a decrease in the use of domestic agricultural products (Kim, 2012; Kim and Jang, 2018). iCOOP has done institutional work to introduce Fair Trade while minimizing conflicts with the norms operating in their organizational field.

Firstly, to introduce Fair Trade, iCOOP constructed a forum in which various stakeholders could participate. In 2006, the iCOOP Co-operative Institute held a forum under the theme of "The Meaning and Direction of Fair Trade in the Consumer Cooperative," publicizing members' demand for safe imported food. In 2007, the Fair Trade Committee was formed with the participation of members, employees, management, and domestic producers to create a system to collect various opinions and promote Fair Trade (Kim and Shin, 2021a, pp. 25-28).

Secondly, the opinions of members were officially collected. About 2,000 members were surveyed on the introduction of Fair Trade. It turns out that the majority of members want Fair Trade (Kim and Shin, 2021a, pp. 28-29). From the beginning of its establishment, iCOOP has established a policy basis to determine the direction of cooperative business centered on members and to provide better benefits and values to members (Kim and Ji, 2018, p. 240). The fact that the majority of members support Fair Trade could be the justification for introducing it despite some objections.

Third, by setting the criteria for handling Fair Trade products as 'items that are not produced domestically or items with a domestic self-sufficiency rate falling below 3%' (iCOOP 2020, 56), Fair Trade products were positioned as complementary products to domestic products. Through this, it minimizes tension with the organizational field that has placed importance on the production and distribution of domestic food. As of 2021, sugar, cacao, coffee, spices, olive oil, almonds, bananas, etc., rarely produced in Korea, are being imported through Fair Trade (SAPENet, 2022).

Fourth, a favorable environment for Fair Trade was formed by creating a fund to support domestic producers with a portion of the sale price of some Fair Trade products. The creation of the fund intended to alleviate concerns about Fair Trade goods which might replace domestic products (Kim and Shin, 2021a, pp. 95-96).

New practices have been incorporated into the organizational identity. When Fair Trade was introduced, iCOOP declared 'ethical consumption' as its mission. By incorporating Fair Trade in the practical direction of this new mission, Fair Trade became recognized as one of the various practices of the organization (Yeom and Kim, 2018, p. 29), and was readily accepted into the organization.

The concept of 'ethical consumption' includes creating a food system of ethical production and consumption for 'food safety' (Kim and Ji, 2018, p. 244). By recognizing Fair Trade as one of the ethical consumption practices, iCOOP established Fair Trade products as safe food, adhering to its commitment to safe food since its establishment. During education on food safety for both members and non-members, Fair Trade was included in the education contents, leading to the recognition of Fair Trade products as safe food. By linking safe food and ethical consumption with Fair Trade, iCOOP aimed to include Fair Trade in its organizational identity, creating an environment where members could easily accept Fair Trade.

In 2019, iCOOP adopted a new mission (SAPENet, 2020). At the same time, changes occur in the organization's structure, messaging, product development, and establishment of new organizations. Throughout this process, actors who have actively practiced Fair Trade tried to connect Fair Trade with the new mission to ensure the continuation of Fair Trade even if the organizational identity would change. The intention was to secure legitimacy for Fair Trade activities by linking them with the new mission and avoid tension between them.

4.2 Routinization Work

Institutional works that integrate newly normalized practices into formal structures and routines reflect and influence complex inter-institutional relationships (Smets and Jarzabkowski, 2013, p. 1302). A routine is a repetitive, recognizable, interdependent pattern of behavior performed by multiple actors, including informal rules or norms, actions dependent on the actors' resources and intentions (Feldman and Pentland, 2003), and formal designs, models, platforms, and artifacts including rules (Tuominen et al., 2020). Since iCOOP was formed in 1997 with six cooperatives, it has reorganized its organizational structure several times. Whenever the organizational structure was reorganized after the start of Fair Trade, the part related to Fair Trade was also changed to fit the new organizational structure. However, Fair Trade practices have always been positioned as a complementary role to the production and consumption of domestic eco-friendly organic food to avoid conflict with strong norms in the organization field.

Fair Trade practices are aligned with the organization's strategy and structure. The policy and organizational structure of iCOOP have been reflected in Fair Trade practice. iCOOP has maintained a strategy of integrating its businesses around a business federation for the purpose of management efficiency. However, primary cooperatives which function rather as members' associations without direct business have split themselves to increase member participation when the number of members exceeds a certain level (Shin, 2011, 25). Whereas the business federation contributes to the vitalization of cooperatives through business, the federation of primary cooperatives aims for a horizontal network of members focusing on delivering the message of iCOOP to society (Kim, 2018, p. 160). This operational strategy was also applied to Fair Trade practices. Fair Trade has been practiced by dividing it into business and promotional activities. Coop Trade Co., Ltd. is responsible for importing and distributing Fair Trade products, while primary cooperatives and their federation are responsible for education and campaign activities (Kim and Shin, 2021b, pp. 31-32).

iCOOP has established a distribution certification center to manage the quality and distribution of domestic food. Most Fair Trade products are also imported products certified by Fairtrade International without contamination at each stage of the supply chain (Kim and Shin; 2021a, p. 227). Even when dealing directly with a producer group without receiving Fair Trade certification, complete quality control is conducted according to the internal food policy of the organization and that of the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (Jang et al., 2022). This way, iCOOP has maintained Fair Trade practices by adapting its structure for Fair Trade activities whenever the organizational structure changed.

Fair Trade practices are positioned as a secondary practice. Positioning Fair Trade as a supplement to the existing business models minimizes the conflict between normative values and practices of the organizational field. iCOOP imports Fair Trade products that cannot be produced in Korea. Since iCOOP started Fair Trade, its share of Fair Trade sales in total sales has steadily increased until 2019. However, Fair Trade products still account for about 2% of total sales in iCOOP (Kim and Shin, 2021a, p. 69). Compared to domestic products, Fair Trade products are less diverse, making it difficult for members to recognize them among other domestic products.

In addition, iCOOP is actively involved in various social issues in communicating them to its members. As it has responded to various social issues, such as eco-friendly free meals served in schools, environmental issues, among others, Fair Trade is one of these diverse activities (Heo, 2018).

Primary cooperatives offer various activities for their members to participate in, and only those who express interest in Fair Trade attend the education programs and organize related activities. The extent of Fair Trade activities varies among each primary cooperative and also changes over time.

Even though Fair Trade is not a significant activity, iCOOP has conducted more education and campaigns on Fair Trade than any other organization in Korea. Despite not being a core business or activity in the organization, the number of iCOOP primary cooperatives participating in Fair Trade education and campaigns has increased over time. According to Kim and Shin (2021a, pp. 138-156), iCOOP primary cooperatives have conducted 3,147 Fair Trade education programs from 2009 to 2019. In the case of Fair Trade campaigns, 1,298 were conducted, and the number of campaigns has also increased over time.

4.3 Network Work

To create institutions, actors try to make a network of organizations and form peer groups involved in compliance, monitoring, and evaluation. Forming a loose coalition of motivated actors constitutes a normative network that influences the new institution. The newly formed network supports the activities of actors (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, pp. 224-225).

Despite being a secondary practice, iCOOP continued to participate in external activities related to Fair Trade. The Fair Trade organizational field has been created and spread with various actors' efforts, including Fair Trade organizations. In Fair Trade practice, actors of iCOOP tried to bring external resources into the inside by forming a loose alliance with the outside. They expanded Fair Trade practices by transferring the knowledge acquired from the outside to the inside.

Fair Trade practices have expanded through the inflow of external resources. Local governments such as Seoul City, Incheon City, and Gyeonggi Province have participated in the Fair Trade Towns movement, enacted ordinances on Fair Trade support and fostering, and prepared budgets based on the ordinances. Some primary cooperatives have used the local government's budget for Fair Trade education and campaigns while leading or participating in an alliance with various local organizations to create Fair Trade Towns which were an opportunity to expand their activities (Kim and Shin 2021a, 197).

Each primary cooperative has different motives for participating in Fair Trade projects supported by local governments. In some cases, it was carried out at the request of their federation. In other cases, it was initiated by themselves to attract external resources as a way to solve internal problems. Most interviewees evaluated that the flow of Fair Trade resources from outside provided an opportunity to increase the number of member or nurture activist members. They learn that these external activities are actually helpful for the operation of their cooperatives and then more actively participate in external activities.

During the Fair Trade education project supported by local governments, members of iCOOP who have not participated in their activities or non-members participate in the education program. The interviewees recognized Fair Trade as a competitive content to communicate with their members. It is also recognized that it is helpful to inform about iCOOP to those who are not members of iCOOP.

Some members wanted to enhance the value and competitiveness of cooperatives through Fair Trade. Interviewees commented that receiving a budget from a local government is advantageous in strengthening the public awareness of cooperatives and increasing members. As primary cooperatives are distributed across the country, education and campaign activities related to Fair Trade differ according to the regions, the cooperative's financial situation,

the available human resources, and the interest and capacity of the directors and activist members. However, in the case of members using external resources related to Fair Trade, they recognized that this helped to operate their cooperatives. When primary cooperatives had this experience, they tried to strengthen their activities by mobilizing external resources.

Fair Trade practices are expanded by the internal transfer of knowledge gained through Fair Trade activities.

Some primary cooperatives have conducted Fair Trade festivals, campaigns, and education on a larger scale as they received external support. The degree of Fair Trade practices varied among primary cooperatives, but they shared their experiences through various exchanges. At the Fair Trade festival held in Seoul, members from other provinces could learn about diverse examples of Fair Trade campaigns. As the cases of active promotion of Fair Trade were shared, knowledge about Fair Trade spread among primary cooperatives. Activist members shared experiences and knowledge through official events and various informal networks.

Some interviewees recognized that expanding external activities to the board members for the promotion of Fair Trade Towns was an opportunity to inspire and help motivate them. Moreover, these experiences were passed on to the board members of the federation.

The Fair Trade movement began with Incheon City in 2010 and has actively spread in Seoul and Gyeonggi Province. According to Kim and Shin (2021a, p. 188), 23 out of the 38 primary cooperatives active in the Seoul metropolitan area participated in the Fair Trade Towns Movement. As the Fair Trade Towns movement became active, a regional Fair Trade committee at the level of Seoul metropolitan area was formed. Furthermore, this movement affected primary cooperatives in other regions that wanted to become more familiar with or were not interested in Fair Trade yet.

4.4 Reflection Work

During the process of various institutional works to introduce and expand Fair Trade practices within iCOOP, various actors identified some issues that hindered the growth of Fair Trade practices in their cooperatives. Therefore, they attempted to resolve these problems by reflecting on what practices should be maintained and what needs to be changed.

Actors identified problems on Fair Trade practices. The actors of iCOOP involved in Fair Trade activities identified several issues, such as a lack of public awareness, communication problems and limitations of activities. They recognized that internal communication in the cooperative movement would be smoother if the decision-makers of the movement correctly understand the external environments regarding Fair Trade.

Furthermore, they expressed the need of a common position on fair trade within the iCOOP system. In some external activities, various actors of iCOOP expressed their personal opinions instead of the organization's position, which caused confusion among outside stakeholders. The actors of iCOOP began to perceive this as a problem.

Recently, as primary cooperatives have increased their external activities in Fair Trade Towns Movement, they have also recognized the limitations of their activities. In particular, as they started the Fair Trade Towns Movement with various actors, including businesses, schools, local politicians, and public officials, they recognized that they needed more expertise in the activities.

Interviewees recognized that their

experience in iCOOP had limitations in informing and persuading local opinion leaders about Fair Trade. They evaluated their activities as 'self-satisfying' and realized that as the targets to be persuaded changed, they had to overcome their limitations. However, they also found that their experience as a cooperative leader was beneficial in managing external activities. Their experience of analyzing articles of incorporation, organizing meetings, and conducting education and training programs with members serves as strength in external activities.

Members of iCOOP have access to various educational programs aimed at strengthening their participation. According to Kim (2018, pp. 145-146), iCOOP has developed member education step by step, which includes 'registration education', 'new member education' and various programs to nurture leaders, such as the 'Introduction to Director Course' and 'Intensive Director Course.'

However, some interviewees commented that the competencies gained from these programs may not be sufficient to actively participate in an organization at the national level. They argue that the required competencies are different from those needed in regional organizations, and it is challenging to understand the complex needs of stakeholders operating nationwide and participate in decision-making accordingly.

Recognizing these limitations, they proposed to iCOOP to foster expertise within the organization, but their proposal was not readily accepted. However, as the Fair Trade Towns movement has become more active, there has been a growing recognition of the need to strengthen expertise on Fair Trade within the organization, and more intensive support has been provided. As a result, the organization was reorganized at the end of 2018, and the national Fair Trade Committee was reformed. Activist members interested in Fair Trade were selected, and professional education programs for the Fair Trade Towns movement were introduced (Kim, 2022).

Actors sense and respond to internal tension about Fair Trade practices. The iCOOP federation provides a platform for various actors to engage in discussions and decision-making processes. However, cooperatives need to balance their business and association aspects when making decisions, which may result in different opinions among stakeholders. The Fair Trade practice within iCOOP has been carried out amidst differing perceptions and positions of various actors within the organization. This difference in perception is noticeable between primary cooperatives that actively participate in Fair Trade education, campaigns, and Fair Trade Towns movements and other primary cooperatives that are relatively less interested in Fair Trade. Similarly, there is a difference in perception between management and employees within the federation, on one hand, and primary cooperatives, on the other hand, which sometimes leads to indifference and at other times tension.

Management and employees within the federation often prioritize the business aspects of Fair Trade, emphasizing the expansion of sales through managing the quality and price of Fair Trade products. This is because the Fair Trade Towns movement or the Fair Trade campaign did not directly contribute to iCOOP's business, as most interviewees recognize. However, primary cooperatives that organize activities in their regions recognize the Fair Trade Towns movement as an opportunity to expand their network with various local actors and strengthen the participation of members as well as non-members. Some directors recognized the difference between the associational and business dimensions of Fair Trade and tried to reduce tensions that may arise through Fair Trade practice by strengthening connections between the business and association activities, intending to develop their activities in a direction that can be beneficial from a business perspective.

In an organization, actors in different positions and roles may have varying opinions about the most critical activities. For instance, if business sustainability is crucial for management or employees in the federation, primary cooperatives may focus on being sustainable as an association in their region. Therefore, the motivation and practice of Fair Trade may differ depending on the actors' role. However, some actors are aware of this situation and try to combine business and association activity to ensure the legitimacy of Fair Trade practice within the organization.

5. Conclusion

iCOOP performed four institutional works while introducing, maintaining, and developing Fair Trade activities: identity, routinization, network, and reflection. In order to mitigate tension between the traditional focus on domestic eco-friendly organic food and the newly introduced Fair Trade, identity work was performed to include Fair Trade in the organizational identity. Additionally, the Fair Trade practice was aligned with the organization's operating policy and structure. Routinization work was carried out to make Fair Trade a complementary role in spreading the production and consumption of domestic eco-friendly organic food. Even though Fair Trade was positioned as a secondary practice, actors tried to bring external resources to the organization through network activities with other Fair Trade actors. Recognizing and responding to possible tensions within the organization, actors in iCOOP who actively participated in Fair Trade practices developed reflections on what practices should be maintained or changed to expand Fair Trade practices.

These institutional works were performed intentionally by various actors within the organization, such as the federation, primary cooperatives, and individuals. The federation undertook works that reflect members' demands, while primary cooperatives led efforts to strengthen cooperative activities in their region. Initially, the federation played a significant role in introducing and stabilizing Fair Trade within the organization. More recently, some leaders of primary cooperatives have been working work to strengthen their organizational capabilities and fulfill their social responsibilities through Fair Trade. The intentions and efforts of actors in various positions interacted to perform institutional works and when different interests among actors emerged, some actors tried to maintain and develop Fair Trade while reconciling conflicting interests. This process was also shaped also by the characteristics of cooperatives and the tension between business and association activities.

For various actors in an organization to accept and internalize new practices, a shared understanding must be formed, and actors in various positions should carry out various institutional works with intentions and motivations. This study analyzes the process of iCOOP's acceptance and expansion of Fair Trade and shows the process of institutionalizing new practices that caused certain tension within the organization.

The theoretical implications of this study are as follows. Firstly, this study contributed to research on institutional change by analyzing the institutional works that actors undertake to accommodate new practices that conflict with existing institutions. Institutions are ubiquitous in daily life and influence the behavior of actors, and most actors take them for granted. Institutions that provide action guidelines for actors are formed in the organization and the organizational field. However, introducing a new practice that conflicts with existing institutions creates tension between actors who want to accept the new practice and those who reject it. Changes occur as various institutional works are performed by actors in different positions.

Secondly, the analysis aims to enhance understanding of institutional changes in cooperatives, which have a dual nature as businesses and as associations. The process of introducing Fair Trade in iCOOP illustrates that the tension between the two inherent natures of cooperative was created and managed through the intentional efforts of various actors. Particularly in a large-scale organization like the iCOOP movement, the complexity of interests represented by different positions of actors also needs to be considered.

This study demonstrates that changes in organizations or institutions are not achieved through managerial decision-making or fragmentary execution of specific strategies but through various institutional works composed of interactions among actors with various roles in the organization, as well as their interactions with various institutions. Therefore, introducing a new practice in an organization requires meticulous institutional works for institutionalization.

The limitations of this study include the fact that it is based on a single case study without comparing the differences and similarities with the institutional works that other cooperatives carry out in similar situations. In addition, since it relies on limited literature and interviews, there may be problems with generalizing the findings from this case. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct follow-up studies on institutional changes in cooperatives in Korea.

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Institutionalisation of the Cooperative Identity

L'institutionnalisation de l'identité cooperative
La Institucionalización de la Identidad Cooperativa

Producing Statistics on the Social and Solidarity Economy, Challenges and Opportunities[1]

Marie J. Bouchard [2]

Producing Statistics on the Social and Solidarity Economy, Challenges and Opportunities

Abstract

As policymakers pay increasing attention to cooperatives and more generally the social and solidarity economy (SSE), the demand for statistics which is needed for social and political recognition and government support are also growing. Over the last decades, national statistical offices and researchers (academic and institutional) have done significant work to develop methodologies and gather data at the national and international levels. Despite these achievements, many countries and regions lack statistical information about cooperatives and other SSE organizations in their territories. Moreover, the data produced at the national level are still difficult to compare internationally. This paper presents a short summary of work realized for the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Social and Solidarity economy (UNTFSSE), and discusses some of the issues arising from defining, measuring, mapping and policy making for producing statistics on cooperatives and the SSE, and comparing them at the international level.

1 Based mainly on papers from the panel session “Statistics on the social and solidarity economy (SSE): cooperative and SSE identity” at the ICA Global Meeting and Research Conference, Seoul, November-December 2021

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Produire des statistiques sur l’économie sociale et solidaire, les défis et les opportunités

Résumé

Alors que les décideurs publics accordent de plus en plus d’attention aux coopératives et plus généralement à l’économie sociale et solidaire (ESS), la demande pour des statistiques se fait de plus en plus sentir. Celles-ci sont nécessaires à la reconnaissance sociale et politique du champ et à son soutien par les pouvoirs publics. Au cours des dernières décennies, les agences statistiques nationales et les chercheurs (universitaires et institutionnels) ont accompli un travail considérable pour développer des méthodologies et collecter des données aux niveaux national et international. Malgré ces réalisations, de nombreux pays et régions manquent toujours d’informations statistiques sur les coopératives et autres organisations de l’ESS sur leur territoire. Qui plus est, les données produites à l’échelle nationale sont encore difficilement comparables à l’international. Ce document présente un bref résumé du travail réalisé pour le Groupe de travail inter-agences des Nations Unies sur l’économie sociale et solidaire (UNTFSSE), qui examine certaines des questions soulevées par la définition, la mesure, la cartographie et l’élaboration de politiques pour produire des statistiques sur les coopératives et l’ESS et les comparer au niveau international.

Elaborar Estadísticas sobre la Economía Social y Solidaria, Retos y Oportunidades

Resumen

A medida que los responsables de las políticas públicas prestan cada vez más atención a las cooperativas y a la economía social en general, crece la demanda de estadísticas. Éstas son necesarias para el reconocimiento social y político del campo y para su apoyo por parte de las autoridades. En las últimas décadas, los organismos nacionales de estadística y los investigadores (académicos e institucionales) han realizado un trabajo considerable para desarrollar metodologías y recopilar datos a escala nacional e internacional. A pesar de estos logros, muchos países y regiones siguen careciendo de información estadística sobre las cooperativas y otras organizaciones de la ESS en sus territorios. Además, los datos producidos a escala nacional siguen siendo difíciles de comparar a escala internacional. Este documento presenta un breve resumen del trabajo realizado para el Grupo de Trabajo Interinstitucional de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Economía Social y Solidaria (UNTFSSE), que examina algunas de las cuestiones relacionadas con la definición, medición, cartografía y desarrollo de políticas para elaborar estadísticas sobre cooperativas y ESS y compararlas a escala internacional.

1. Introduction[3]

As policymakers pay increasing attention to cooperatives and more generally the social and solidarity economy (SSE), the demand for statistics, which are needed for social and political recognition and government support, is also growing. Over the last decades, national statistical offices (NSOs) and researchers (academic and institutional) have done significant work to develop methodologies and gather data at the national and international levels. Despite these achievements, many countries and regions lack statistical information about the SSE in their territories. Moreover, the data produced at the national level are still difficult to compare internationally. Although in many cases the lack of adequate means to produce statistics is one of the primary causes of this situation, globally agreed statistical methods and indicators which ensure systematic data collection and coordination also must be established.

A recent project led by the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD) on the account of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task-Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTSSE), aimed at documenting the *Opportunities and Challenges of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Statistics*[4]. The project's objectives were to contribute to knowledge diffusion and transfer about robust methodologies and high-quality approaches for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of SSE Statistics. An expert workshop held in Brussels in November 2019 helped identifying the issues at stake and plan the work (UNTFSSE et al. 2019). A set of three papers was produced by CIRIEC International researchers and published by the UNTFSSE in 2021 (Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021; Chaves-Ávila, 2021; Compère, Sak and Schoenmakers, 2021)[5]. This paper presents a short summary of this work, and discusses some of the issues arising from defining, measuring, mapping and policy making with regards to statistics on cooperatives and the SSE, and from comparing them at the international level.

2. SSE Statistics and public policies

The purpose of measuring a phenomenon is to counteract the lack of visibility and improve overall knowledge and recognition of it, namely, to support public policy development. Statistics are important to design policy and evaluate its implementation (Chaves-Ávila, 2021). Social actors also benefit from measuring the size and scope of the sector, as the SSE's contribution is often left under the radar of national accounts. As SSE initiatives often instigate various sectoral policies, statistics help monitor this contribution and render it visible. In return, statistics highlight the importance of the SSE and legitimize public policies regarding it. In some recent legislations about the SSE, the production of statistics is mentioned as an obligation to government.

2.1 Statistics to inform public policy

One of the reasons statistics are needed is to inform and assist the orientation of public policies. Statistics help assess the

3 We thank reviewers for their insightful comments on a previous version of this text.

4 Coordinated by Ilcheong Yi (UNRISD) and Marie J. Bouchard (UQAM and CIRIEC International), this project was funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea (represented by Statistics Korea) and carried out by UNRISD as the implementing organization of the UNTFSSE Knowledge Hub. The project team acknowledges the support of CIRIEC International for the project. See: https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/project-opportunities-and-challenges-of-statistics-on-sse/.

5 This article draws on the reports produced in the context of this study.

importance of an issue or a field, and to evaluate whether to include it in the policy agenda. Further on, statistics help holding governments accountable, monitoring progress in policy implementation and eventually renewing or reorienting objectives. Statistics serve as evidence-based information for policymakers but also for stakeholders who join in to implement policies.

Various types of programmes and policies can be addressed to the SSE, some aiming at developing the SSE as a whole, others directly affecting the sectors in which the SSE plays key roles, (e.g., agri-food business, financial, social and health services, culture, etc.), others affecting the SSE indirectly (e.g., education, social security, labour policies, etc.) or addressing specific niches in which the SSE is likely to emerge (e.g., information technologies and digitalization, local and territorial development, environmental protection, ecological transition, etc.).

Classic indicators may be used to measure the size and scope of the SSE, such as number of entities, contribution to wealth (value-added, share of GDP), investment, exportations, employment (paid and unpaid workers), or membership. Statistics may also show the contribution of the SSE per sector of economic activity and per SSE sub-sector, for e.g., market producers and non-market producers (e.g., Instituto Nacional de Estadistíca and CIRIEC-España, 2013). As the economic activity of the SSE carries social goals, national statistics, often supplemented by specific surveys, may help examine the SSE's impacts on territorial development, gender equality, social cohesion, work conditions, etc. When produced on a regular periodic basis, statistics help follow the growth – or decline – of specific sectors or forms of SSE organizations, and to relate is to the general context, exposing the vitality of the sector.

Still, classic indicators and methodologies may not suffice to show for the SSE's full contribution, namely its multiplier effects and impacts on the reduction of poverty and social inequalities (Ramos, 2019) or its contribution to sustainable development goals (UNTFSSE, 2022).

2.2 Legitimizing the SSE

Although other means of planning and monitoring public policies exist, producing statistics contributes to legitimizing the SSE as field of action for policy makers. It calls for – and then contributes to – an agreed-upon definition of the SSE, in accordance with national legislations on various SSE organizations (cooperatives, associations, mutuals, etc.) and, where it exists, through a legislative framework on the SSE.

There is presently a variety of national SSE definitions, which makes it difficult to harmonize figures internationally. Laws on the SSE (or related terms such as "third sector" or "social impact companies") have recently been adopted in many OECD countries: France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Québec (Canada), Romania, Spain and Mexico (OECD, 2022), and are developing in almost all continents (Hiez, 2021). Producing national statistics is costly and time consuming, which is why it requires lasting policy support and recurrent financing. Some laws enforce the production of statistics through the implementation of observatories, periodical surveys, or satellite accounts, as it is the case in Portugal, Tunisia or Québec. It can be noted that many legislations that support the production of statistics in Europe, the Americas and Africa explicitly mention cooperatives as part of the SSE (Bouchard and Chaves, 2022).

The European Union also calls for the creation and development of SSE statistics, helping to support their implementation by NSOs through its statistical agency Eurostat, or commissioning mapping studies (EU, 2015 and 2020[6]). As the SSE is recognized as a key player in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, the ILO, the OECD and the United Nations recently also adopted resolutions that recommend making visible, when feasible, its contribution in the compilation of national statistics.

3. Supporting the harmonization of SSE statistics

Over the last three decades, significant work has been devoted to developing approaches and methodologies to gather data about the SSE at national and international levels. Despite these achievements, the statistics available do not cover a homogenous field of the SSE, making aggregation and comparison across countries difficult, and countries continue to struggle to produce data about cooperatives and the SSE. Frameworks are developed to support the development and harmonization of statistics. Still needing to be based on a consensual definition of the field, they can nevertheless serve to draw and organize data about the field (Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021).

3.1 From legal to statistical definitions of SSE organizations

The first task in any production of statistics is to define the "object" or the "beings" to be measured, namely by defining the rules for building the statistical population. Statistical studies on the SSE are usually based on conceptual frameworks that establish which types of entities should be covered, and therefore which should be excluded, establishing the perimeter of the study.

Two strong ideal types (in the sociological sense) of the SSE help provide nuanced statistical definitions and consequently lead to draw a different perimeter of its statistical population. The cooperative is one of strongest models, having its own chart of principles and values since 1844, widely shared across the world, updated in 1995, and developed into guidance notes in 2015 (ICA, 2015). The recent *Guidelines Concerning Statistics of Coperatives* (ILO, 2018), arising from a 2017 conceptual framework (ILO et al., 2020), provide a statistical definition of the cooperative, which is based on its internationally recognized definition, used for legal purposes by the International Cooperative Alliance and the International Labour Organization (ILO 2002 Recommendation No. 193).

Another strong figure of the SSE is the non-profit organization (NPO), whose statistical definition is included in the System of National Accounts, the 2008 SNA, as non-profit institution (NPI): "The only essential criterion for a unit to be treated as an NPI is that it may not be a source of income, profit or financial gain to its owners." (EC et al., 2009, par. 23.3). Contrary to cooperatives, there is no international apex or representative NPO network where to discuss the non-profit organizations' statistical definition. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (JHCNSP) has however strongly contributed to developing and refining the statistical definition of NPIs, used in a manual published in 2003 by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD, 2003).

Added to cooperatives and NPOs, other types of organizations take part to the SSE, some with strong shared identity such as associations and mutual societies (and other similar forms specific to certain countries[7]), others with statuses that are more varied such as public-benefit foundations and social enterprises, not necessarily sharing all the SSE values and principles. Producing statistics for the SSE hence requires grouping various forms of entities within a common operational framework.

3.2 Approaches to producing statistics about the SSE at the international level

Two approaches have been put forward to delineate the SSE statistical population with a common international framework. The first is based on a concept of the SSE mainly anchored in the cooperative model and emphasizing democratic dimensions, such as in the *Manual for Drawing up the Satellite Accounts of Companies in the Social Economy: Co-operatives and Mutual Societies* (CIRIEC, 2006), the *Conceptual Framework for the Purpose of Measurement of Cooperatives and Its Operationalization* (ILO et al., 2020) and the *Guidelines Concerning Statistics of Cooperatives* (ILO, 2018). The latter is built around a concept of the SSE based on NPOs and voluntarism, and emphasizes the non-profit constraint, such as in the *Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts* (UNSD, 2003) but that in a more recent revision – the *Satellite Account on Not-profit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work* (UNSD, 2018), extends to "other related institutions" claiming to cover the "Third or Social Economy (TSE)". This revised framework does include a variety of entities, such as cooperatives, as long as they "totally or significantly limit profit distribution" (p. 11). A footnote later indicates that cooperatives which distribute all or most of their surpluses to members "may still be within the scope if such distribution is a central part of the social purpose of the organization designed to reduce costs to members" (p. 19). If this distribution is understood as patronage refund (reimbursement of surpluses in proportion to members' activity – and not to held shares), then many cooperatives would be considered included in the perimeter. If on the contrary the profit distribution constraint is rigorously applied, then many cooperatives would be out of scope. In between, there seems to be a grey area regarding cooperative's patronage allocation whose explicit aim is to support producers' income and improve their productivity, such as in farmer cooperatives.

The TSE framework is currently being tested in six European countries, four of which are receiving funding from Eurostat on the condition that they agree to use it (France, Poland, Spain and Slovenia), and two of which have adopted it on an autonomous basis (Luxembourg and Portugal). Meanwhile, the ILO is also pilot-testing the ILO 2018 *Guidelines Concerning Statistics of Cooperatives* in five countries (Costa-Rica, Italy, South Korea, Tanzania and Turkey). The results of these studies will surely help move forward with these issues. For example, whereas the ICA 2019 mapping exercise reported 8 917 cooperatives in Poland (Cooperatives Europe, 2019), the satellite account recently produced in that country with the TSE handbook counted only 1 300 of them, as "[h]ousing cooperatives, cooperative banks, SKOKs, and other cooperatives are perceived [in Poland] as typical enterprises, although they meet most of the defining characteristics according to the UN Handbook" (Statistics

6 Also see country mappings:
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?advSearchKey=socentercountryreports&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=1307&doc_submit=&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

7 Such as *ejidos* in Mexico or misericórdias in Portugal.

Poland, 2021, p. 63). In Portugal, the previous work based on combining the social economy and NPO approaches was adapted in a more recent study with reference to the TSE, through a modular approach to cover the social economy as defined in the Portuguese law (INE & CASES, 2019; Ramos, 2019).

This recalls that the concept of the SSE developed and institutionalized differently in different parts of the world. In some countries and cultures, "it explicitly presents itself as an alternative to capitalism", while in others, it is seen "more humbly as another way of doing business" (Hiez, 2021, p. 24). This situation illustrates the fundamental differences between two conceptual approaches to the SSE, that of the social economy and that of the non-profit and voluntary sector. While the first considers social economy organizations as "a-capitalist" enterprises (Demoustier, 2001), not necessarily opposed to generating surpluses or profits, but in which patronage refunds is but a fair economic practice (Colas, 1985), the later sees them as an exception to the strict profit distribution constraint. Moreover, "the social economy approach emphasizes democratic processes, whereas nothing of the sort is found in the non-profit approach" (Defourny and Nyssens, 2016, p. 1548).

3.3 Producing statistics in practice

In practice, the statistics that are needed nationally are those of the SSE as defined in each respective country. Standard norms are used to harmonize and compare statistics across sectors and industries in the national accounts. What is not standardized is the identification of SSE entities. The leading role in the production of statistics is ideally held by national statistical offices (NSOs), with the support of government agencies, research institutes, representatives of umbrella organizations, and other non-governmental entities involved in the development of the SSE. A good practice is to set up a statistics technical working group, to coordinate such collaboration between producers and users of statistics (Chaves, 2021). In some cases, the production of statistics by research institutes and NSOs precedes the adoption of a law on the SSE, the statistical work serving as an initial framing of the field. The relevancy and legitimacy of such early work is reinforced when developed with robust methodologies and in agreement with national SSE umbrella organizations.

Reliable sources for identifying SSE entities are needed, for example, business and administrative registers. Screening work is needed as these rarely pinpoint all forms of SSE organizations. Official statistics produced by NSOs have comparative advantages over those of other producers, as they are based on ethical and professional principles which protect them from vested interests and bind them to strict impartiality. However, NSOs often lack financial resources and knowledge about the SSE to respond adequately to the demands coming from governments and SSE stakeholders.

Some government departments or agencies produce data about subtypes of SSE organizations active in their respective policy area. These are however difficult to aggregate in SSE mappings on a national scale, and even more so between countries. Umbrella or apex SSE networks, in the absence of a better source, tend to produce their own statistics. Having the advantage of knowing the sector very well and of being well anchored in SSE grassroot entities, they however lack financial resources and may not have all the skills to produce statistics with methodological rigour. Moreover, they may be suspected of having contingent interests or of being biased in their interpretation of the data.

Universities and research centres, as independent institutions, offer similar professional and ethical conditions as

NSOs, and often collaborate with them as well as with sector organizations, adding their cumulated experience and knowledge about the SSE field. However, having no access to administrative data and no authority to compel survey respondents, academic researchers face limitations in collecting data and producing time series about statistics of the SSE.

As mentioned, two ideal-type SSE organizations, the cooperative and the NPO, serve as the basis for statistical definitions of SSE entities in international recommendations regarding SSE statistics. There however seems to lack a clear comprehension of the distinction between cooperatives and NPOs. The inclusion in the TSE of new hybrid forms of for-profit, non-collectively owned or non-democratically controlled "social enterprises" contributes to blurring the picture. While debates continue, it is still possible to move on with producing statistics on the SSE referring to international standards with what can be called a modular approach. This entails developing separate modules to cover non-profit institutions, cooperatives and mutual societies, and other forms of SSE enterprises present in each country (UNSD, 2018, pp. 27-28). The case of Portugal shows how the modular approach is a promising path forward (INE & CASES, 2019).

The recent adoption of a "universal definition" of the social and solidarity economy by the International Labour Conference (ILO, 2022) – definition that was included in the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly (UN, 2023) – will increase the interest of public policy for the SSE and for measuring it with statistics. Further work will be needed to clarify the statistical definition and framework for the social and solidarity economy, work that has been undertaken by the ILO, which also serves as the secretariat of the United Nations' Inter-Agency Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE). This will hopefully help making SSE statistics both legitimate in different national contexts and readable in an international comparative perspective.

4. What do recent international mappings tell us about the SSE?

The notion of "mapping" is an abstraction of the process of making a geographical map. The exercise consists of grouping information about a phenomenon at the level of territories in a manner that helps harmonize, compare and aggregate the information across territories. Mapping also gives an overview of how this information is collected in each territory and exposes the methodology for aggregating it at a superior territorial level. The paper produced in the context of this work for the UNTFSSE exposed how international mappings compared to one another, in other words a "mapping of international mappings" (Compère et al., 2021).

Given the lack of comparative studies on statistics of the SSE, particularly in documenting its size and economic and social contribution, Compère et al. (2021) reviewed not only studies on statistics but also those dealing with economic and social aspects of SSE relevant to methodologies and production of statistics. This extensive review of existing mapping exercises identified 30 key mapping exercises on the SSE or subsets of it published between 2015 and 2019. Mappings expose the variety of definitions of the SSE found in different national contexts. The methodologies also vary, as data sources are not available to the same extent in each country or region. And in total, few of these maps actually present statistics on the SSE.

4.1 Mapping the scale and scope of the SSE

The scale and scope of international mappings vary, covering different geographical areas and encompassing all the SSE (albeit with various definitions of it) or only subsets of it such as social enterprises, cooperatives, mutuals, or “third sector” (non-profit organizations, foundations, etc.). Some cover a large region, such as *“The social economy in the European Union”,* studies recurrently commissioned to CIRIEC (2007, 2012, 2017). Others focus on the periodical mapping of a subset of the SSE such as cooperatives or social enterprises. An example is the *World Cooperative Monitor,* published yearly since 2012, gathering each year data about the 300 of the largest cooperatives (ICA and Euricse, 2022). Another is the mapping of social enterprises and their ecosystem in Europe, commissioned by the European Commission (European Union, 2015 and 2020). Others still cumulate information coming from numerous national case studies and analyse it with statistical tools to map the organizational morphology of emerging social enterprises. This is the case of the ICSEM *(International Comparative Social Enterprise Models)* project led by the EMES research network (Defourny, Nyssens and Brolis, 2019).

4.2 Mapping the methodologies to measure the SSE

International mappings of the SSE illustrate the variety of statistical sources and methodologies used to measure the SSE in different national contexts. There are several ways to collect and collate statistical information on SSE, such as extracting administrative data (e.g., satellite account), conducting a survey (e.g., census, representative or convenience sample survey), or a combination of both (e.g., observatories). There are also other types of information gathered through examining the results of qualitative and quantitative research trying to capture and understand SSE or some of its specific aspects or components. The final stage of a mapping exercise is to produce outputs in various forms including a report, a geographical world map or research papers.

Different types of data sources are used in the international mappings of the SSE studies. A first is the extraction of statistical data from administrative, legal or institutional documents, such as business or administrative (e.g. fiscal) registers, or coming from SSE apex organizations. An example is the study which the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) commissioned to CIRIEC. This mapping highlights that several of the 28 countries of EU have put a great deal of work into providing reliable data on various social economy groups (CIRIEC, 2017).

A second data source comes from case studies produced with a common methodology in different national contexts. For instance, in the ICSEM project’s research teams from 38 countries around the world collected data from a non-representative sample of social enterprises in each country based on a common questionnaire. Not designed for producing statistics, such studies may reveal interesting information and tendencies about the SSE but cannot however measure their relative importance or weight in the economy.

A third data source is the extraction from thematic or visual “maps” containing information collected or deposited by SSE organizations, depicting various aspects about them such as sector, geographical region, activities, etc. For instance, a world map of SSE organizations, case studies, trainings, etc. can be found on the website of socioeco.org[8]. Often made available on the Internet, such mappings provide a research function to help users find the statistical information they seek. The quality of the information varies, depending on the primary sources and the periodicity with which it is updated.

Often, crossing sources of data help to mitigate errors, include smaller-size entities, exclude out-of-scope entities, etc.

4.3 Few statistical mappings of the SSE

In their study, Compère et al. (2021) show that more than half (57%) of the 30 international SSE mappings they observed were produced through research initiatives. Almost a third (30%) were thematical maps and only 13% were based on statistical measurement of the SSE. A little over half were regularly (20%) or irregularly (37%) updated, while 43% were “one-shot” operations. Almost half (47%) covered the SSE as a whole, the rest covering subsectors of it. For mappings where the implementer was identified (21 out of 30), 10 were commissioned by a national or international authority (e.g., the European Commission) and 11 were produced by non-state actors (e.g., research institutes or think tanks). In fact, most mapping exercises observed involve a mix of both public and non-state actors in terms of funding, manpower, data source and communication.

Among the issues identified by authors are the various methodologies and therefore variable robustness of the data presented in the mappings, adding to the variety of perimeters covered by them. Mostly, only very few SSE international mappings (4 out of 30) compile statistics that had been produced by a public body. Indeed, a significant role is played by research institutes not related to public administrations, which explains the lack of periodical updating of mappings, as recurrent funding is not guaranteed.

5. Conclusion

This paper offers a brief overview of some of the questions surrounding the production of statistics about the social and solidarity economy (SSE), based on recent work undertaken by UNRISD for the UNTFSSE Knowledge Hub. The paper examines some of the motivations to producing SSE statistics with regards to public policy. It explains what is at stake when developing common international statistical framework for defining SSE population or perimeter. It reviews what can be learned from recent international SSE mapping exercises.

Statistics are essential to identify needs, set goals, and monitor progress of public policies. Without data on SSE, it is difficult to understand and value the role it plays in the economy and society. In return, statistics also contribute to the recognition of the field, not only to governments but also to SSE actors and other economic agents, as it institutionalizes its definition and renders it visible to society. For countries to create and develop SSE statistics in a systematic manner, it can be recommended to include it as an obligation in SSE action plans or laws and to have the NSO regularly update data about the SSE with the help of recurrent funding. Setting up a working group composed of producers and users of SSE statistics, from government agencies and SSE umbrella organizations to universities and research institutes will favour knowledge transfer and coordination between those interested in such data. Referring to common standards is more than commendable, as data about the SSE need to be interpreted with regards to data about the rest of the economy. It is also important to harmonize the

8 www.socioeco.org/solutions_en.html

information across countries in order to obtain a global picture of the weight and scope of the SSE in the world.

Mappings of the SSE expose the various national definitions and legal forms of the SSE, which reflect the different historical processes of evolution and progressive deployment, as well as the diversity of economic and political contexts in which the SSE is situated today. This also echoes the different economic models within which the SSE develops, as well as the different paths of its institutionalization. In this context, compiling and comparing data on SSE around the world remains a challenge. Due to multiple definitions and varying degrees of legal recognition for SSE organizations, the perimeter covered differs between countries and even subnational regions. Mapping studies however help pave the way towards more comprehensive research and production of statistics at a larger scale.

Statistics need to be based on definitions that help identify SSE entities and exclude others. Standardized definitions and methodologies help the aggregation and comparison of SSE statistics across countries. Two SSE ideal types of organizations influence international statistical frameworks, the cooperative (and social economy), on the one hand, and the non-profit organization, on the other. While sharing common characteristics, they differ in their relation to profit generation and distribution but also to democracy. Then again, the situation is furthermore complicated by the advent of so-called social enterprises, which tends to blur the frontiers of the SSE field. The emerging notion of "limited profitability" may come in help for this purpose (Driguez, 2019). This principle, which still needs to be fully defined, enables a vision of the SSE "both close to and different from the non-profit sector, and bridge the gap between both sectors, and hence make clear the difference between the Social and Solidarity Economy and the capital-based sector" (Hiez, 2021, p. 53). This would help moving "both centers of gravity (of the non-profit sector and of the social economy) towards each other in a more balanced way, so as to explore common defining features related to both profit distribution and governance » (Defourny and Nyssens, 2016, p. 1552).

As of now, international frameworks for SSE statistics can nonetheless be used through a modular approach that may both accommodate national SSE legal definitions and help harmonize SSE statistics across countries. Further work will however be needed in this field as international organizations recognize the SSE and build high expectations about its performance and contribution. More research to better integrate the ILO work on cooperatives to the UNSD work on NPOs will help further the already important work committed in this field (Bouchard and Chaves, 2022; Salamon et al., 2023). Testing the UNSD 2018 *Satellite Account on Not-profit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work* in Europe, and pilot testing the ILO 2018 *Guidelines Concerning Statistics of cooperatives* in four continents will bring precious information about how to implement the statistical measurement of the SSE in various national contexts. Extending the ILO work on the statistics of cooperatives to those about the SSE is part of the ILO *Strategy and action plan on the SSE* (ILO September 2022), following the adoption of the ILO *Recommendation on Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy in 2022* (ILO June 2002). This work should help make the needed adjustments to fit the realities of the SSE in different national settings. It will also benefit from deeper reflexions about the appropriate indicators to assess the SSE's contribution, and about to the necessity to complement statistics with other methodologies to understand how SSE functions, innovates, develops niches, etc. Special attention should be given to national contexts where the SSE is still weakly institutionalized, as the international statistical frameworks could

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Experiencias en Coproducción de políticas públicas e identidad cooperativa en el siglo 21

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Experiences in Public Policy Coproduction and Cooperative Identity in the 21st century

Abstract

This panel proposes to analyse, compare, and draw hypotheses and conclusions on processes and spaces of co-production of public policies related to cooperatives and cooperative identity in the 21st century. The four papers are by academics and three of them are by professionals who are or have been involved in the process of co-production of public policy, two in particular with responsibility for them. The cases are: Costa Rica, Uruguay, Ecuador and Mercosur.

Keywords: cooperative identity, public policy, policy coproduction, cooperatives, sustainable development goals

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Expériences de coproduction de politiques publiques et d'identité coopérative au 21ème siècle

Résumé

Ce panel propose d'analyser, de comparer et de tirer des hypothèses et des conclusions sur les processus et les espaces de co-production des politiques publiques liées aux coopératives et à l'identité coopérative au 21ème siècle. Les quatre articles sont rédigés par des universitaires et trois d'entre eux sont rédigés par des praticiens qui sont ou ont été impliqués dans le processus de co-production des politiques publiques, deux d'entre eux en particulier en ayant la responsabilité. Les cas sont les suivants : Costa Rica, Uruguay, Équateur et Mercosur.

Mots clés: identité coopérative, politiques publiques, coproduction de politiques publiques, coopératives, objectifs de développement durable.

Experiencias en Coproducción de políticas públicas e identidad cooperativa en el siglo 21

Resumen

Este panel propone analizar, comparar, y extraer hipótesis y conclusiones sobre procesos y espacios de co-producción de políticas públicas relativas a cooperativas y la identidad cooperativa en el siglo 21. Las cuatro ponencias son de académicos y tres de ellas son de profesionales que son o han sido participes del proceso de co-producción de política pública, dos en particular con responsabilidad en los mismos. Los casos son: Costa Rica, Uruguay, Ecuador y Mercosur.

Palabras clave: identidad cooperativa, política pública, coproducción de políticas públicas, cooperativas, objetivos de desarrollo sostenible

1. Introduction

Este panel analiza, compara, y extrae hipótesis y conclusiones sobre procesos y espacios de coproducción de políticas públicas relativas a cooperativas y la identidad cooperativa en el siglo 21. No se incluyen todas las referencias de las ponencias ni los debates teóricos por falta de espacio. Las cuatro ponencias son de académicos y tres de ellas de profesionales que son o han sido participes del proceso de coproducción de política pública, dos en particular con responsabilidad en los mismos. El presente trabajo propone el análisis de la evolución de las políticas públicas en materia de cooperativismo a nivel nacional en Costa Rica, Uruguay, Ecuador y a nivel de integración regional, el Mercosur. Dichas políticas han evolucionado desde la promoción de débiles iniciativas para la atención de necesidades de grupos sociales, hacia acciones promovidas desde el Estado en la creación de condiciones para el desarrollo del modelo cooperativo, y en las últimas décadas, se han institucionalizado espacios de co-creación, co-construcción y cogestión de políticas públicas entre el Estado y el movimiento cooperativo, excepto en Ecuador, en todos los casos que trata este Panel. Los espacios nacionales definen y ejecutan de manera directa las acciones establecidas para la defensa y promoción del movimiento en el país o correspondiente. El espacio regional define o contribuye a definir, propone y aboga, pero no ejecuta.

El marco de políticas públicas en el siglo 21 estaría en medio de una transición, alejándose del modelo clásico weberiano propio del periodo industrial, por a) una creciente complejidad e intersección de crisis que multiplica necesidades y urgencias, y b) una búsqueda de legitimidad para las respuestas a dichas crisis. El interés público sería ahora "una empresa colectiva que involucra el gobierno y muchos otros actores y ciudadanos como creadores de valor y coproductores de resultados públicos, una idea que está poniendo de cabeza la administración pública" (Bourgon, 2011).

El argumento principal en que, en base a las actividades, resultados, incluyendo su grado de reconocimiento, y productos de los varios años de existencia, se constituyen como espacio de construcción conjunta de política pública relativa a las cooperativas que tiene un impacto ampliado a otras áreas de desarrollo, redes, territorios, y entidades cercanas como las mutuales y asociaciones.

El contar con espacios de co-construcción contribuye así en áreas de política pública con función especializada como áreas particularmente pobres y vulnerables, la agricultura familiar, la generación del empleo y las políticas de inclusión, es decir el desarrollo económico sostenible con una mayor cohesión social. No menos importante ha sido la construcción como espacio de comunidad epistémica y generadora de conocimiento, con talleres, capacitaciones, publicaciones, investigaciones, intercambios y formación de expertos y futuros funcionarios en otras áreas e incluso países.

2. Identidad cooperativa, resultados y contribuciones a los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible

Entre otros resultados se han observado:

1. Contribuciones al diseño e implementación de políticas públicas regionales y nacionales.

2. Creación de espacios de reflexión e intercambio de información como encuentros, talleres y capacitaciones que sentaron las bases para el diseño e implementación de política públicas regionales y nacionales, y de allí para una colaboración interinstitucional en temas de interés regional y nacional.

3. Logros de consensos en la implementación de políticas públicas, mejorando su alcance y calidad.

4. Construcción de políticas públicas nacionales de forma integral o parcial

5. Construcción y fortalecimiento de redes de profesionales y expertos

6. Formación de recursos humanos en distintas áreas y niveles de educación.

Se trata en estos casos de una búsqueda de desarrollo integral, de dar respuestas a distintos tipos de crisis que se van sumando, de promover un crecimiento con mayor sostenibilidad y cohesión social. Las experiencias refuerzan la identidad cooperativa y la búsqueda de políticas adecuadas y respetuosas de dicha identidad, siendo beneficioso para que las cooperativas contribuyan mejor a los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible (ODS) de la agenda de Naciones Unidas (ONU) 2030.

Incluso donde no hay aun este espacio de construcción conjunta, la experiencia reciente de consulta y elaboración Constitucional ha llamado y promovido la participación de representantes sobre todo de las cooperativas, en cuanto actores de la economía solidaria, lo cual permitió luego plasmar en los cuerpos normativos del país, los principios y valores que promueven esta otra forma de economía.

Sin embargo, es fundamental notar algunas características que comparten estas experiencias y las hacen sostenibles y enriquecedoras:

1) Es el conjunto del Estado, que comprende a su gobierno central, gobiernos departamentales, empresas públicas y demás entes, el obligado a promover el cooperativismo (y desde 2019, por extensión a toda la economía social y solidaria pero siempre respetando la identidad cooperativa como nodo central).

2) Es el espacio de co-construccion y co-creacion quien propone, políticas públicas y coordina planees y programas con los organismos públicos, articulando con ellos a través de la suscripción y ejecución de convenios. No se delega ni se circunscribe la promoción del cooperativismo. Se la asigna un papel articulador. Si la promoción del cooperativismo estuviera limitada a sus instrumentos de acción directa y a sus fondos de fomento y financiamiento, no existirían políticas públicas integrales para el sector.

3) Se trata de una búsqueda de política pública integral, legitima, que integra toda la información, desafíos y posibilidades.

4) El espacio se constituye como una persona pública no estatal, vinculada con el Poder Ejecutivo a través del organismo correspondiente, pero es autónoma en su funcionamiento.

5) Esa autonomía está respaldada por fuentes de financiamiento, mismo siendo limitadas o crecientes en algunos casos.

6) El Estado o región acuerdan de asignar recursos de forma permanente desde el Presupuesto global de forma transparente

7) En los casos nacionales, es una buena práctica el poder recaudar directamente de las cooperativas un paratributo o recursos establecidos de forma consensuada y debidamente aprobados y supervisados, además de obtener ingresos provenientes de la administración y ejecución de convenios con otros organismos. De esa forma, no se depende exclusivamente de la voluntad política que se manifiesta a través de las leyes presupuestales y rendiciones de cuentas anuales.

8) Se trata por lo tanto de la construcción de un proceso de política pública de largo plazo, política de 'estado' en el sentido que no es de 'gobierno'.

9) El otro elemento clave es la gobernanza

10) Es importante el aprendizaje mutuo entre las diversas iniciativas de co-construccion de política pública, en contextos similares, como realizado entre las experiencias tratadas en este panel.

11) La política pública debe observarse globalmente, más allá de la labor del espacio en cuestión, cada cual, habiendo mantenido y fortalecido acuerdos con otros organismos públicos, áreas, redes e instituciones, que, si bien estos tienen su propia impronta y agendas, tienen consecuencias para el desarrollo del cooperativismo.

12) La continuidad obedece en parte a las características de las personas que toman la conducción del espacio de co-construcción respectivo. Sin embargo, cabe una explicación más profunda, que tiene que ver con la capacidad dialógica del movimiento cooperativo, de su independencia, de su vocación representativa coherente y coordinada, de su respaldo social, todo ello también presente en sus representantes en el Directorio de cada experiencia de este panel.

Efectivamente, la participación de los actores de la economía solidaria en la construcción de la política pública, y durante su ejecución y evaluación, no solo produce efectos positivos en las economías personales y familiares, reducción del desempleo y subempleo, y consiguiente mejoramiento de la calidad de vida de las personas involucradas; sino que también fortalece su identidad como socios de una asociación autónoma, formada para satisfacer necesidades y aspiraciones que comparten entre sí, por medio de una empresa de propiedad conjunta que aplica en su funcionamiento los valores y principios solidarios y cooperativos. En el siglo 21, por todo lo expresado, la co-creación, co-construccion y co-gestión de políticas públicas, así como la dimensión epistemológica del conocimiento generado, resultaría de interés para otras regiones del mundo, tanto gobiernos como representantes de cooperativas.

3. Las experiencias en política pública y la identidad cooperativa

3.1 Uruguay - INACOOP

En el caso de Uruguay, El Instituto Nacional de Cooperativas es una entidad jurídica no estatal de derecho público según la Ley de 2008. Propone, asesora y ejecuta la política cooperativa nacional. Su objetivo es promover el desarrollo económico, social y cultural del sector cooperativo y su inserción en el desarrollo del país. Por ley y en la práctica, asesora al Estado, promoviendo los principios y valores cooperativos, creando un sistema nacional de información pública sobre el sector. "

3.1.1 Políticas estatales clásicas

La co-construcción y co-producción de las políticas públicas entre el Estado y los actores sociales exige el cumplimiento de algunos requisitos previos que analizaremos.

En Uruguay, la Ley de Cooperativas 18.407 del año 2008 marcó un jalón significativo para el cooperativismo y su relación con el Estado.

A grandes rasgos, podemos decir que en el período anterior a la sanción de esta ley no existieron políticas públicas de promoción del desarrollo del cooperativismo en su conjunto, sino políticas sectoriales dentro de las cuales se asignó un papel a determinadas ramas del sistema cooperativo.

Esto se refleja en la legislación: Se sancionaron, desde los años ´40 a los ´80 distintas normas legales, una para cada sector del cooperativismo (agrarias: 1941/1984, consumo y trabajo: 1946, vivienda: 1968, ahorro y crédito: 1971), cada una con una concepción diferente de la naturaleza de las cooperativas y respondiendo a las demandas de la época.

En materia de políticas públicas, podemos mencionar, como grandes ejemplos, la ley de creación de la Cooperativa Nacional de Productores de Leche (1935), que respondió a la necesidad de facilitar y regular el suministro de leche a la ciudad de Montevideo y por la que se creó un tipo especial de cooperativa con participación estatal en su gobernanza, y la Ley Nacional de Vivienda de 1968, cuyo capítulo X previó y reguló diversos modelos de cooperativas de vivienda, que constituyeron un eje fundamental del desarrollo de la construcción de viviendas sociales de buena calidad al alcance de la clase trabajadora, con amplio impacto barrial en la extensión de los servicios urbanos.

Todos estos ejemplos, además de ser dirigidos a ramas específicas del sistema cooperativo, tienen como común denominador su verticalidad; se impusieron desde el Estado sin la participación del movimiento cooperativo organizado.

La forma de legislar se reflejaba en el tipo de relacionamiento entre el Estado y las emergentes gremiales cooperativas. Cada sector encaraba su temática propia y se relacionaba específica y únicamente con un área estatal. Así, el Ministerio de Ganadería y Agricultura se relacionaba con los representantes de las cooperativas agrarias, el Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social con las cooperativas de trabajo, el Banco Central con las de ahorro y crédito.

3.1.2 Las tentativas de legislación previas a 2008 - Fracasos con moralejas

Enumeramos y caracterizamos los intentos de creación de una ley general de cooperativas.

a) 1974-76. Nace como iniciativa de la Organización de Cooperativas de América, que impulsaba una ley marco para América Latina. Se trata de una iniciativa tomada desde un organismo internacional, que se presenta a un gobierno dictatorial y en un momento en que no existe una Confederación que aglutine a todo el cooperativismo y donde las federaciones y entidades de promoción se encuentran seriamente restringidas en su accionar, debido al cercenamiento de las libertades.

b) 1985-86: Se trata de una aspiración de la recién constituida Mesa Nacional Intercooperativa, planteada al primer gobierno emergente de la recuperación democrática. Si bien no prospera, en esa fase se obtiene el primer logro: la constitución de una Dirección de Fomento Cooperativo, dentro del Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social.

c) 1991-1992: Ha avanzado el diálogo entre el gobierno nacional y el movimiento cooperativo organizado. La Mesa Nacional Intercooperativa ha evolucionado hacia la formalización de la Confederación Uruguaya de Entidades Cooperativas (CUDECOOP). Sin embargo, los consensos son trabajosos y progresivos. CUDECOOP elabora un anteproyecto de ley, redactado inicialmente por su Comisión Jurídica, que resulta modificado sustancialmente

en el Consejo Federal, como reflejo de grandes diferencias de enfoques entre las federaciones y entidades socias. Como consecuencia, nadie se siente comprometido con el anteproyecto, que ingresa al Poder Ejecutivo y recorre infructuosamente sus ministerios, recogiendo más observaciones que artículos tenía. Es de hacer notar, sin embargo, que el incipiente diálogo Estado-Cooperativas cristaliza en 1991 en la conformación de la Comisión Honoraria del Cooperativismo, ubicada en el ámbito de Presidencia de la República. Si bien carecía de presupuesto propio y de facultades resolutivas, fue un ámbito compartido entre 3 delegados gubernamentales y 2 de CUDECOOP.

d) 1999-2008: El movimiento cooperativo aprende la lección. Se toma el tiempo necesario para generar un total consenso interno que se plasma en un anteproyecto de Ley General de Cooperativas, que se presenta al Parlamento en 2004, con la firma de diputados de todos los partidos políticos. Ese acuerdo de los parlamentarios, nada usual en temas sustanciales, es fruto a su vez de un diálogo sostenido y de una organización gremial que da garantías de representatividad de todas las modalidades del cooperativismo (la consigna era: “un movimiento, una ley”). transparencia e independencia frente a los partidos políticos. El diálogo se sostiene durante el trámite parlamentario, en el período 2005-2008) entre la Comisión Honoraria del Cooperativismo y la Comisión Especial de la Cámara de Representantes. Culmina con la sanción de una ley votada por unanimidad en las dos cámaras que componen el Poder Legislativo. Nace entonces el Instituto Nacional del Cooperativismo, que se integra en diciembre de 2009; con él, comienza una fase de co-creación y co-producción de política pública en materia de cooperativismo.

3.1.3 INACOOP

La ley 18.407 declara a las cooperativas de interés general y ordena al Estado su promoción. Este punto es fundamental: es el conjunto del Estado, que comprende a su gobierno central, gobiernos departamentales, empresas públicas y demás entes, el obligado a promover el cooperativismo (y desde 2019, toda la economía social y solidaria). INACOOP es quien propone, políticas públicas y coordina planees y programas con los organismos públicos, articulando con ellos a través de la suscripción y ejecución de convenios. No se delega ni se circunscribe la promoción del cooperativismo, se la asigna un papel articulador. Si la promoción del cooperativismo estuviera limitada a sus instrumentos de acción directa y a sus fondos de fomento y financiamiento, no existirían políticas públicas integrales para el sector.

En segundo lugar, se constituye como una persona pública no estatal, vinculada con el Poder Ejecutivo a través del Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, pero autónoma en su funcionamiento.

Esa autonomía está respaldada por sus fuentes de financiamiento. El Estado compromete recursos permanentes del Presupuesto Nacional, pero a su vez el Instituto recauda directamente de las cooperativas un paratributo y además obtiene ingresos provenientes de la administración y ejecución de convenios con otros organismos. De esa forma, no depende exclusivamente de la voluntad política que se manifiesta a través de las leyes presupuestales y rendiciones de cuentas anuales.

El otro elemento clave es la gobernanza, para la cual se tomaron otros ejemplos latinoamericanos. Existe un Directorio compuesto por tres delegados del Poder Ejecutivo y dos de CUDECOOP, un Consejo Consultivo en el que están representadas todas las ramas del cooperativismo y la dirección de la educación pública, incluida la Universidad de la República, una Junta Directiva del Fondo para el Desarrollo, también de composición mixta que, como variante, incorpora un delegado sindical (que se corresponde con la promoción de las empresas recuperadas por los trabajadores). Finalmente, el Director Ejecutivo es necesariamente designado o removido por una mayoría especial del Directorio que requiere el acuerdo entre los directores políticos y los sociales.

La actuación de INACOOP desde su creación ha atravesado cuatro gobiernos nacionales, los tres primeros de la fuerza de izquierda denominada Frente Amplio y la actual de una coalición de las anteriores fuerzas opositoras, lideradas por el Partido Nacional.

Es importante constatar que, mientras la política nacional en su conjunto ha tenido un importante cambio de orientación, los grandes lineamientos de INACOOP han mantenido una continuidad importante, a modo de lo que se denomina generalmente como "política de estado", que trasciende a los gobiernos de turno. A esto añadimos las restricciones presupuestales y operativas y la revisión de las prioridades nacionales derivadas de la crisis global originada por la pandemia del COVID 19.

Por cierto, la política pública debe observarse globalmente, más allá de la labor de INACOOP. El Instituto ha mantenido y fortalecido acuerdos con otros organismos públicos, si bien estos tienen su propia impronta, con sus consecuencias para el desarrollo del cooperativismo y la economía social. Un análisis particularizado excedería los límites de esta investigación.

Sin duda, esta continuidad obedece en parte a características de las personas que han tomado la conducción del Instituto y del Ministerio respectivo. Sin embargo, cabe una explicación más profunda, que tiene que ver con la capacidad dialógica del movimiento cooperativo, de su independencia, de su vocación unitaria, de su respaldo social, todo ello también presente en sus representantes en el Directorio.

3.1.4 Política pública de promoción e identidad cooperativa - CUDECOOP

La política pública, si se ejerce de forma vertical y descendente desde el Estado, puede perjudicar seriamente la identidad del cooperativismo, a partir de una intervención excesiva, creadora de lazos de dependencia, que puede subordinar las aspiraciones e intereses de los cooperativistas a los que inspiran a los gobernantes.

Para que sea recíprocamente beneficiosa, debe existir una institucionalidad respetuosa de la autonomía, que sirva de base para la co-creación y co-gestión de las políticas.

Esa institucionalidad es insuficiente si el movimiento cooperativista no genera las condiciones internas para ser representativo de todos sus sectores y su territorio, genuinamente unitario en el reconocimiento de su diversidad y la búsqueda permanente de consensos internos e independiente de los actores políticos. Solamente sobre esas bases puede dialogar en pie de igualdad y ganar reconocimiento. Esa ha sido la tarea de CUDECOOP desde sus albores.

A su vez, una vez alcanzado ese espacio de interlocución y cogestión, la identidad cooperativa se profundiza. El reconocimiento del espacio de la Confederación en la legislación y las instituciones la posicione más fuertemente en su interior. En Uruguay, la ley reconoce a CUDECOOP como entidad única de representación, no por imposición legal, sino recogiendo la realidad preexistente. Así hallamos representantes suyos en el Directorio y la Junta Directiva de INACOOP, como también ha accedido al Consejo Directivo del Instituto Nacional de Empleo y Formación Profesional (INEFOP). Ha sido un verdadero trabajo cooperativo. A su vez, sus federaciones ocupan lugares de dirección en otros entes públicos, como ocurre en el sector agropecuario.

Referencia de base: INACOOP: https://www.inacoop.org.uy/

3.2 Costa Rica - INFOCOOP

"El Instituto Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo (INFOCOOP) es una institución pública encargada del fomento y desarrollo del cooperativismo en Costa Rica, desde 1973, con personalidad jurídica propia y autonomía administrativa y funcional. Según el artículo 155 de la Ley de Asociaciones Cooperativas (LAC), el INFOCOOP tiene por objeto: fomentar, promover, financiar, difundir y apoyar el cooperativismo en todos sus niveles...".

El Instituto Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo (INFOCOOP, en Línea: https://www.infocoop.go.cr/) es un producto de esas políticas públicas alrededor del cual se articula la política pública costarricense. Fue creado en 1973 con la finalidad de desarrollar el cooperativismo en todos los niveles, para lo cual estructura cinco áreas de servicios: Asistencia Técnica, Financiamiento, Promoción, Supervisión Cooperativa, así como Educación y Capacitación. Este Instituto es un ente público descentralizado y dirigido de forma coparticipativa con el movimiento cooperativo, ya que tiene mayoría de miembros en su Junta Directiva, nombrados por periodos de dos años de forma democrática por el propio movimiento. El INFOCOOP articula sus metas en el marco del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, sumando aportes relevantes para el país, generando beneficios de alto impacto por medio de las cooperativas, donde se llevan registros estadísticos en materia de empleo, desarrollo, inversión, crédito y asistencia técnica.

Los antecedentes del cooperativismo costarricense se encuentran dispersos en el desarrollo del Estado liberal de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, espacio-tiempo donde esa forma de organización se consolidó en el país trayendo consigo mejoras sociales, culturales y educativas; las cuales no representaron necesariamente avances económicos para la mayoría de la población.

Las formas de concentración de riqueza fortalecidas en el país sobre la base de una economía agroexportadora basada en el café y el banano, acrecentaron también formas de explotación entre pequeños productores agrícolas, comerciantes y artesanos; los cuales buscaron formas alternativas de distribuir la riqueza generada y de organizarse para atender sus necesidades económicas.

Hacia las primeras tres décadas del Siglo XX, la lucha social estaba consolidada en el país, periodo en el cual el cooperativismo ya había hecho sus primeras apariciones para que de la mano del Estado, fueran promovidos sectores como la agroindustria del café, la construcción de viviendas, el consumo de bienes básicos y los gremios artesanales. Pese a ello, los resultados no fueron sostenibles por falta de capacidades en el país.

La década de los cuarenta del siglo pasado trajo consigo una de las reformas sociales más importantes en el país. Además de establecer la universalidad del seguro social, se crearon insituciones públicas de educación superior y otras para atender diversos sectores productivos, donde el cooperativismo empieza a consolidarse con la primera legislación formal en el año 1943.

Luego, con la inclusión constitucional para la promoción del cooperativismo en 1949, la creación de una especie de rectoría en el Banco Nacional para formar cooperativas, colocar crédito y promover nuevos sectores económicos, el cooperativismo se articuló no solo como institución sino como movimiento social, generando una serie de procesos de diseño y ejecución de políticas públicas, las cuales han favorecido la identidad cooperativa y el desarrollo nacional.

En el contexto de ese Estado de Bienestar, en el periodo comprendido entre 1949 y 1982, las políticas públicas en materia de cooperativismo articularon importantes acciones con instituciones autónomas estatales, las cuales se caracterizaron por lo siguiente:

- Cooperativas agrarias, impulsadas desde el Instituto de Tierras y Colonización primero y el Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario posteriormente, para la atención de sectores campesinos con necesidades de tierra.

- Cooperativas cafetaleras impulsadas por el Banco Nacional, asignando crédito e infraestructura productiva.

- Cooperativas de electrificación rural impulsadas desde el Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (ICE), el Banco Nacional y el programa Alianza para el Progreso con el objetivo de desarrollar importantes regiones en el país.

- Cooperativas de ahorro y crédito, con impulso del Banco Nacional y Alianza para el Progreso, con la finalidad de incrementar el ahorro y la demanda interna; así como el acceso a crédito rural en cantones productivos (Salazar, 2020).

En el año 1973, el país oficializa la institucionalización del cooperativismo nacional creando el Instituto Nacional de Fomento cooperativo, con presupuesto propio y autonomía, favoreciendo los procesos de formación de capital social entre grupos pre-cooperativos, así como la mejora de habilidades y educación cooperativa.

En 1982, el avance de la estructura del movimiento cooperativo se fortalece con la institucionalización del sector autogestionario con autodeterminación para la toma de decisiones y manejo presupuestario; así como la creación de un ente privado que administra recursos públicos para la educación y la capacitación cooperativa como es el Cenecoop R.L.

Como puede determinarse, la identidad histórica del cooperativismo costarricense ha evolucionado en los últimos 150 años gracias al desarrollo de legislación propia, articulación con el Estado y la ejecución de políticas públicas específicas para el sector. Ello ha permitido construir capacidades estructurales para atender la desigualdad en los territorios, por medio de la identidad y la educación cooperativas.

Actualmente, el sector cuenta con capacidades que han consolidado su institucionalidad como movimiento social pero también como sector económico independiente, con funciones propias en la co-creación y co-gestión de dichas capacidades instaladas que le permiten flexibilizar la toma de decisiones de cara al futuro.

Referencia de base: https://www.infocoop.go.cr/

3.3 Ecuador - SEPS

Desde 2012, en virtud de la Constitución de la República de Ecuador, la SEPS se encarga de promover los principios de cooperación, democracia, reciprocidad y solidaridad en las actividades económicas que realizan las organizaciones de EPS. Aunque no es un socio del movimiento cooperativo, su labor, mediante el control de las actividades de las organizaciones de economía solidaria, tiene como objetivo fortalecer el sector.

A partir del análisis de las políticas públicas que se han ejecutado en Ecuador para fomentar la economía solidaria desde la vigencia de la Ley de Economía Popular y Solidaria, es importante plantear algunas propuestas para involucrar a los actores de la economía solidaria en todas las fases de la política pública que les atañe.

Es preciso partir de breves definiciones respeto de los términos a utilizar. Así, siguiendo a Vaillancourt (2011: 2), al hablar de co-producción, se hace referencia a la “participación de los actores de la sociedad civil y del mercado en la implementación de las políticas públicas”. En cambio, la co-construcción se refiere a la participación de estos mismos actores en la elaboración de las políticas públicas. Por tanto, la co-construcción se encuentra antes de la decisión respeto a qué políticas públicas ejecutar, mientras que la co-producción actúa cuando dichas políticas se ejecutan.

En Ecuador, el fomento de la economía popular y solidaria, que alcanzó un reconocimiento importante en la última Constitución Política, vigente desde 2008, se realizó a través de una normativa e institucionalidad fuertes, además de la creación de un aparato burocrático grande y diferenciado, que en los dos últimos gobiernos ha perdido fuerza, a la par de la poca importancia concedida a esta otra economía. No obstante, los principales organismos creados en la ley de la materia, con cambios, siguen activos.

Como ente rector de la EPS, la Ley Orgánica de Economía Popular y Solidaria, crea el Comité Interinstitucional de la EPS, conformado por los ministros de Estado de las carteras que tienen relación con esta otra economía, según lo determine el Presidente de la República[6].

Además de este órgano, existe un número considerable de instituciones, de distintos niveles, algunas funcionando expresamente, y otras con fines más generales, encargadas del fomento y desarrollo de la EPS en Ecuador, a lo que se suman las competencias que en materias que se entrecruzan con la economía solidaria, tienen los gobiernos autónomos descentralizados.

Bajo ese esquema, se puede afirmar que la política pública se ha planteado a grandes rasgos en las reuniones del Comité Interinstitucional, donde se ha ido definiendo la hoja de ruta de dichas políticas. Como se adelantó, en dicho Comité participan únicamente funcionarios del Estado, y no se cuenta con la presencia de representantes de los sectores de la EPS. Los actores de la EPS tampoco integran otros organismos decisorios de ninguna instancia vinculada.

Siguiendo el modelo de la co-construcción y co-producción de políticas públicas, se puede asegurar que la participación de los actores principales de la EPS es de vital importancia, por lo que debería preverse en la ley representación obligatoria de los representantes de las organizaciones de EPS en todas las instituciones públicas encargadas del fomento y control del sector.

En ese sentido, cabe plantear para Ecuador, una reorientación de las políticas públicas de fomento de la Economía Solidaria, que se enfoquen más en la inclusión y participación de sus actores que en el crecimiento burocrático institucional del sector, para que paulatinamente se les vaya entregando a dichos actores, mayores responsabilidades dentro de la planificación y ejecución de políticas públicas.

La representación de los actores de la EPS debe formalizarse en la legislación correspondiente, y debe verificarse en todas las instituciones estatales creadas para fortalecer a este sector, así como en el resto de políticas públicas y programas

6 Art. 142 de la Ley Orgánica de Economía Popular y Solidaria.

gubernamentales que les afecten.

No es sencillo depositar la confianza del crecimiento del sector en manos de sus actores, más todavía si no se les prepara para ello. Es preciso que dejen de mirarse a sí mismos como meros beneficiarios de incentivos económicos, a cambio de declararse parte de la economía solidaria. Hay que trabajar en el empoderamiento de los actores del sector como verdaderos agentes de cambio de un modelo económico excluyente a uno solidario.

En este esfuerzo, los centros académicos y universitarios pueden ser de mucha ayuda, pues cuentan con infraestructura humana y física que permite proveer de conocimientos técnicos, pero también filosóficos y de principios a los actores de la EPS.

Referencia de base: https://www.seps.gob.ec/

3.4 MERCOSUR RECM - Reunión especializada de cooperativas

El MERCOSUR decidió crear la Reunión Especializada de Cooperativas el 10 de octubre de 2001, como un órgano con representación gubernamental de los cuatro estados miembros y de las entidades del sector cooperativo nacional. El marco institucional permitió tratar aspectos legislativos y productivos, creando espacios y recursos comunes para el sector cooperativo y las cooperativas nacionales.

La integración regional ha dado lugar a dos organismos oficiales del Mercosur donde los movimientos cooperativos nacionales contribuyen al desarrollo de la región de forma inclusiva al mismo tiempo que ha reforzado la identidad cooperativa: la RECM y la REAF. El Mercosur es intergubernamental (no hay supranacionalidad) y se construye con espacios institucionales de coparticipación entre los estado-nación, por un lado, y los movimientos sociales y empresariales, por el otro, de los cuales el cooperativismo forma parte.[7]

La Reunión Especializada de Cooperativas del Mercosur - RECM, creada en el 2001, reúne a los movimientos cooperativos nacionales y a entidades gubernamentales de los países miembros del Mercosur.[8] La REAF profundiza el diálogo e intercambios sobre la agricultura familiar y fue creada en 2004.

Las actividades y resultados de la RECM de 21 años de existencia (2001-2022), es que es un espacio de construcción de conocimiento con impacto ampliado a otras entidades cercanas como mutuales y asociaciones. Ha contribuido en áreas de política pública siempre desde su función especializada de cooperativas en áreas de frontera (particularmente zonas pobres), la agricultura familiar, la generación del empleo y las políticas de inclusión, es decir el desarrollo económico para una mayor cohesión social.

Dos ejemplos muestran en trabajo de la RECM para reforzar la identidad cooperativa:

1) Taller interregional UE - Mercosur sobre políticas públicas comparadas en

7 Las organizaciones cooperativas de representación nacional son: Confederación Intercooperativa Agropecuaria (CONINAGRO) y Confederación Cooperativa de la República Argentina (COOPERAR) de Argentina; Organización de las Cooperativas Brasileñas (OCB), Central de Cooperativas y Emprendimientos de Economía Solidaria (UNISOL) y Unión Nacional de Cooperativas de la Agricultura Familiar y Economía Solidaria (UNICAFES) de Brasil; Confederación Paraguaya de Cooperativas (CONPACOOP) y Confederación de Cooperativas Rurales Ltda. (CONCOPAR) de Paraguay y la Confederación Uruguaya de Entidades Cooperativas (CUDECOOP) de Uruguay. Ha habido algunas pocas modificaciones desde el 2001.

8 http://www.mercosur.coop/ActividadesDesarrolladas y http://www.mercosur.coop/QuienesSomos

2005: esta reunión interparlamentaria del 2015 entre Unión Europea y Mercosur junto a los movimientos cooperativos de Europa como del Mercosur, representantes de gobiernos nacionales y de parlamentarios de la UE como del Mercosur, en Montevideo, Uruguay. Se trataron las normas contables y la identidad cooperativa, generando conocimiento y movilizando a redes de abogados, contadores, y representantes de los movimientos cooperativos. Se mejoró la comprensión de la situación por parte de parlamentarios y representantes de gobiernos. Los participantes emitieron una declaración sobre la importancia de promover las cooperativas en ambos continentes.

2) El estatuto cooperativo del Mercosur del 2015 que permite la creación de cooperativas regionales de primer y segundo grado.

No menos importante ha sido la construcción de la RECM como espacio de comunidad epistémica y generadora de conocimiento, con publicaciones de libros con aportes de expertos cooperativos sobre las legislaciones y políticas públicas nacionales, políticas tributarias y el rol de las cooperativas en la cohesión social. Aquellos que participaron de sus actividades, durante y luego, han sido participes de otros procesos de política pública e instituciones relaciones con las cooperativas, en sus países de origen – miembros del Mercosur.

El trabajo en red, como con la REAF y Mercociudades; se realiza con talleres de capacitación, propuestas de políticas y estudios. Ha mantenido relaciones con otras regiones como la UE sobre todo a través con el Comité Económico y Social Europeo, y con España. Tiene su sitio web y su sede en el edificio Mercosur de Montevideo. Según un informe sobre la cooperación intrarregional 2005-2015 en el Mercosur (Secretaria del Mercosur 2018), la RECM (mencionada en el informe) brinda valiosos aportes al proceso de integración regional, leyéndose que:

(1) Se contribuyó al diseño e implementación de políticas públicas regionales y nacionales.

(2) Se crearon espacios de reflexión e intercambio de información como encuentros, talleres y capacitaciones que sentaron las bases para el diseño e implementación de política públicas regionales y nacionales, y de allí para una colaboración interinstitucional en temas de interés regional y nacional.

(3) Se lograron consensos en la implementación de políticas públicas, mejorando su alcance y calidad.

(4) Se incidió en la construcción de políticas públicas nacionales (en forma integral o parcial)

(5) Se construyeron redes de profesionales y expertos y se formaron recursos humanos en distintas áreas y niveles de educación.

(6) En agricultura familiar, se fortalecieron los productores familiares, las organizaciones sociales de la agricultura familiar, y se alentó la coordinación conjunta de actividades promovidas por cada uno.

(7) Se favoreció la asociatividad entre actores de la región, y la construcción de una identidad regional.[9]

Para diseñar y decidir una buena política, la cuestión del conocimiento es fundamental. Se observan dos estrategias en particular: 1) la estrategia de codificación del conocimiento y 2)

9 Secretaria del Mercosur 2018, 139-145.

la estrategia de socialización del conocimiento. Asimismo, las actividades de la RECM en relación con la identidad cooperativa y la búsqueda de políticas adecuadas a esa identidad han promovido la contribución de las cooperativas de la región a los objetivos de bien público y común del desarrollo inclusivo con mayor equidad.

La experiencia es consistente con el modelo intergubernamental del Mercosur. La RECM y la REAF en cuanto tales no participan directamente en la fase de ejecución o implementación propiamente dicha. Esto último es del ámbito de los gobiernos nacionales respectivos. Tras 21 años de trabajo de la RECM y 18 años de la REAF, estas experiencias estables y permanentes no pueden ser consideraras como compensatorias en tiempos de crisis, sino como espacios institucionales que explican en parte la integración regional del Mercosur, y como actores activos sirviendo al desarrollo social y económico con una visión inclusiva de largo plazo.

Referencia de base: http://www.mercosur.coop/

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Aprendizajes para la Cooperación: Experiencias Educativas en Argentina e Identidad Cooperativa[1]

Mirta Vuotto[2]

Learning for Co-operation: Educational Experiences in Argentina and Cooperative Identity

Abstract

This article presents a set of Argentinean educational experiences in the field of cooperation in order to highlight the wide variety of initiatives that seek to deepen the cooperative identity. To this end, it considers: 1) education through co-operation to contribute to the development of the cooperative identity in the primary education cycle; 2) teaching about co-operation in university educational institutions to make the cooperative alternative visible when it comes to organising economic and social life; 3) stimulating cooperative educational initiatives through university extension; and 4) the production of content to train for co-operation in cooperative and educational institutions.

In conclusion, the text highlights the fact that, in educational terms, each new cooperative experience builds on the previous one, enriching a web of links and achievements that never ends. They reflect, on the one hand, the nature of a type of structure in which people are at the centre, and on the other hand, the relationships that are built around the raison d'être of the cooperative identity.

Keywords: cooperatives, education, university extension, cooperative publishing, cooperative identity, Argentina.

1 Una primera versión del artículo fue publicada en idioma francés en Revue Internationale de l´Économie Sociale RECMA n.º 364 (p.250-259) Avril 2022.

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Apprendre la coopération : expériences éducatives en Argentine et identité coopérative

Résumé

Cet article présente un ensemble d'expériences éducatives argentines dans le domaine de la coopération afin de mettre en évidence la grande variété d'initiatives qui cherchent à approfondir l'identité coopérative. A cette fin, il examine : 1) l'enseignement coopéraif pour contribuer au développement de l'identité coopérative dans le cycle de l'enseignement primaire ; 2) l'enseignement de la coopération dans les établissements d'enseignement universitaire pour rendre visible l'alternative coopérative lorsqu'il s'agit d'organiser la vie économique et sociale ; 3) la promotion des initiatives éducatives coopératives par le biais de l'extension universitaire ; et 4) la production de contenu pour former à la coopération dans les établissements coopératifs et d'enseignement.

En conclusion, le texte souligne le fait qu'en termes d'éducation, chaque nouvelle expérience coopérative s'appuie sur la précédente, enrichissant un réseau de liens et de réalisations qui ne s'arrête jamais. Ils reflètent, d'une part, la nature d'un type de structure dans laquelle les personnes sont au centre et, d'autre part, les relations qui se construisent autour de la raison d'être de l'identité coopérative.

Mots clés: coopératives, éducation, vulgarisation universitaire, édition coopérative, identité coopérative, Argentine.

Aprendizajes para la Cooperación: Experiencias Educativas en Argentina e Identidad Cooperativa

Resumen

El artículo presenta un conjunto de experiencias educativas argentinas en el ámbito de la cooperación para poner de relieve la amplia variedad de iniciativas que procuran profundizar en la identidad cooperativa. Con ese propósito se toma en cuenta: 1) la educación a través de la cooperación para contribuir al desarrollo de la identidad cooperativa en el ciclo de la educación primaria; 2) la enseñanza sobre la cooperación en las instituciones educativas universitarias para hacer visible la alternativa cooperativa cuando se trata de organizar la vida económica y social; 3) el estímulo a las iniciativas educativas de cooperación a través de la extensión universitaria, y 4) la producción de contenidos que permitan formar para la cooperación en las instituciones cooperativas y en las educativas.

Como conclusión el texto pone de relieve que en el plano educativo cada nueva experiencia de las cooperativas edifica sobre la previa, para enriquecer un tejido de vinculaciones y realizaciones que nunca concluyen. Ellas reflejan, por un lado, la naturaleza de un tipo de estructura en cuyo centro están las personas y por otro, las relaciones que se construyen en torno a la razón de ser de la identidad cooperativa.

Palabras clave: cooperativas, educación, extensión universitaria, editorial cooperativa, identidad cooperativa, Argentina.

1. Introducción

La temática educativa dentro del movimiento cooperativo argentino ha sido escasamente investigada. Sin embargo, la mayor parte de las entidades cooperativas conoce la importancia de la educación, en su sentido más amplio, y el papel que le asignó la Sociedad de los equitativos pioneros de Rochdale, al "cuidar de la educación de sus miembros, para que cada uno supiera qué empujar y dónde poner su hombro" (Holyoake, 1906, p. 267). El interés por la educación, concebida como un factor clave de la transformación social (Fairbairn, 1959) posibilitó que las iniciativas que se concretaron progresivamente en este campo configurasen una sólida base para responder a los desafíos del orden social desde el siglo XIX.

Entre las primeras prácticas cooperativas conocidas en este terreno[3] sobresale la instituida por los pioneros al establecer en la 6ª regla y objetivo de la sociedad "asignar el dos y medio por ciento aplicado a fines educativos". La finalidad de destinarlo a la creación de un fondo especial de educación para el desarrollo intelectual de los socios posibilitó el sostén y fomento de la biblioteca y el desarrollo de diversas modalidades de acción educacional que la sociedad estimó convenientes. Así, el papel asignado a la educación significó para los pioneros "haber comprendido que la condición primera de la organización del trabajo es la instrucción de los trabajadores [...] y como se precian no solo de comprender sus deberes sino de cumplirlos, han decidido consagrar a este objeto el dos y medio por ciento de que aquí se habla" (Garrido, 1864, p. 224).

El desarrollo del modelo de cooperación de Rochdale y las prácticas que luego se definieron como los Principios de Rochdale son el resultado directo de la educación y el aprendizaje. En esta óptica "la educación fue y sigue siendo un motor del crecimiento cooperativo. La voluntad de compartir experiencias y aprender de los éxitos, reveses y fracasos anteriores son factores importantes en el tamaño y la diversidad de las cooperativas en el movimiento cooperativo actual (ACI, 2021, p. 60).

En la Argentina, las principales entidades cooperativas han realizado desde sus orígenes la difusión de los principios, experiencias y aspectos técnicos del cooperativismo y han desarrollado acciones educativas de distinta naturaleza. La confluencia entre difusión y formación que expresaron sus prácticas institucionales en el medio han permitido sostener la identidad cooperativa de quienes se unieron voluntariamente para satisfacer sus necesidades y aspiraciones económicas, sociales y culturales comunes. La amplia variedad de actividades de educación puede ser analizada según las experiencias desarrolladas, para subrayar que ellas se vinculan de distinta forma con opciones que posibilitan: educar a través de la cooperación y contribuir al desarrollo de la identidad cooperativa; enseñar sobre la cooperación en las instituciones educativas universitarias y hacer visible la alternativa cooperativa cuando se trata de organizar la vida económica y social; favorecer iniciativas educativas concernientes a la cooperación a través de la extensión universitaria y producir contenidos que permiten formar para la cooperación en las instituciones cooperativas y en las educativas.

3 Al respecto se debe mencionar la Sociedad de Tejedores de Fenwick (1761) cuyos miembros realizaron la compra de libros de manera individual para fundar en 1808 la Biblioteca Fenwick (Crawford, 2002, p.9). En la exposición de motivos de su reglamento, la sociedad manifestó los valores de ayuda mutua, superación y compromiso con la difusión cultural, traducidos en un esfuerzo educativo que también fue promovido por algunas comunidades owenitas.

Las opciones precedentes serán caracterizadas en este artículo a partir de un conjunto de experiencias desarrolladas en el campo de la educación — en sus distintos niveles —, en las prácticas de la extensión universitaria y en la actividad editorial, para mostrar en cada caso la forma que considera cómo el modelo cooperativo podría ser mejor y más ampliamente aplicado.

2. Educar a través de la cooperación y contribuir al desarrollo de la identidad cooperativa

La identidad cooperativa en la Argentina es una resultante de la cooperación libre, entendida como "la solidaridad para hacer" (Justo, 1921, p.67). Ella surgió como una iniciativa de la sociedad civil a la que contribuyeron la educación escolarizada y la lógica que estimuló la creación de las organizaciones de base y las cooperativas. Luego de un siglo de legislación específica, la consideración del tema en los contenidos curriculares, el desarrollo de experiencias de cooperativas escolares, los intercambios y los congresos pedagógicos permitieron que las instituciones de enseñanza fueran incorporando los conocimientos y prácticas propios de la cooperación.

El cooperativismo, asociado con las nociones de progreso social, de escuela activa y de educación conectada con las competencias laborales, se manifestó de manera explícita a inicios del s.XX en ideas acordes a los principios éticos universalistas y a la renovación curricular que algunas de las principales autoridades educativas promovían desde el Estado. Así, al comenzar la década de 1920, numerosas asociaciones cooperativas fueron constituidas por iniciativa del Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública y se conformaron cooperativas escolares en diez escuelas primarias de la ciudad de Buenos Aires, cuando aún no se había sancionado una ley nacional que regulase el funcionamiento de las cooperativas. A partir de estas experiencias, la temática tuvo mayor presencia en las publicaciones pedagógicas, en el ámbito nacional y provincial.

En el contexto de los recurrentes ciclos de declive y auge socioeconómico, la enseñanza del cooperativismo en las escuelas de nivel primario y medio ganó espacio y en varias provincias se sancionaron leyes que permitían la creación de cooperativas escolares. En 1964, la Ley N.º 16.583, declaró de alto interés la enseñanza del cooperativismo, aunque los vaivenes políticos ocasionados por la sucesión de gobiernos de facto afectaron la concreción de la constitución de cooperativas escolares. Con el retorno a la vida democrática, en 1983, tanto el gobierno nacional como los gobiernos provinciales y sus respectivas legislaturas dieron ocasionales apoyos a esta enseñanza y en 2006 se hizo efectiva su inclusión en la Ley de Educación Nacional, N.º 26.206 (Ascolani, 2021). Diversas entidades vinculadas a la cooperación realizaron acciones constantes en las décadas previas para llegar a este resultado.

En el ámbito de las iniciativas dedicadas a la enseñanza para la práctica de la cooperación[4] se deben mencionar los proyectos que se desarrollan en 676 cooperativas escolares distribuidas en diecinueve provincias — la mayoría localizadas en Córdoba, Santa Fe y

4 Entre ellas se destacan las realizaciones de la Fundación Grupo Sancor Seguros, la Fundación Unión Internacional del Cooperativismo y el Mutualismo Escolar, la Célula Argentina y Latinoamericana de Cooperativismo y Mutualismo Educacional y la Fundación de Educación Cooperativa Idelcoop.

Buenos Aires —. En estas asociaciones, al igual que en las federaciones y cooperativas más consolidadas, existe una identidad cooperativa clara, expresada en un imaginario y en experiencias compartidas, así como en la definición de lo propio frente a otros actores sociales diferentes. En las cooperativas escolares esta identidad se entrelaza con la del establecimiento educacional que la promovió y con las identidades amplias que el sistema educativo promueve. En la provincia de Santa Fe, por ejemplo, hay cooperativas escolares en el nivel medio con tres décadas de existencia, aunque la mayoría tiene menos de una década y media. En esas instituciones, los directivos, docentes guías y una parte de los alumnos comparten un corpus identitario relacionado con los ideales de solidaridad, trabajo colaborativo, responsabilidad y gestión democrática, como elementos que han sido móviles constitutivos de dichas cooperativas. Cabe subrayar que según el énfasis que se atribuya a lo solidario, o a lo económico se genera una tensión entre los fines específicos de las iniciativas, ya sea como laboratorio inicial de cooperativismo, o según objetivos solidarios propios de las entidades cooperadoras o filantrópicas. Por su parte, la vinculación entre las cooperativas escolares y las cooperativas de adultos constituye un campo problemático en cuanto a las identidades, porque es heterogéneo el conocimiento y la identificación de los alumnos cooperadores con respecto a las funciones de las organizaciones de pertenencia. Las expectativas de las autoridades escolares con relación a las cooperativas escolares implican otro aspecto a tener en cuenta, dado que alientan intenciones y actividades no siempre ajustados a la lógica clásica del cooperativismo, apartándose de la concepción de que éstas serían las formadoras de una identidad y capacitación cooperativa consecuente con la que predomina en las cooperativas de adultos.

En síntesis, la particularidad constitutiva de las cooperativas escolares, en su dependencia del sistema educativo y su aún corta experiencia institucional — a las que se suma la transitoriedad de la condición de alumno cooperador — refleja la conformación de una identidad específica como proceso que aún está en marcha hacia su síntesis.

3. Enseñar sobre la cooperación en las instituciones educativas universitarias

Enseñar sobre la cooperación supone favorecer la visibilidad de la identidad cooperativa en el medio académico para dar a conocer las formas cooperativas que adopta la vida económica y social. Al brindarse esta enseñanza en instituciones de educación superior, se ofrecen conocimientos y herramientas que informan sobre la naturaleza de la empresa cooperativa — la razón de ser de su identidad — y los requerimientos que supone trabajar y pertenecer a ella.

En este ámbito convergen las motivaciones de quienes optan por la formación que ofrecen las distintas carreras, y la necesidad de encontrar respuestas sobre las características y condiciones requeridas por las empresas cooperativas para asegurar su perdurabilidad y coherencia. Esto supone contemplar, desde una visión organizacional y de gestión, la condición de propietario que, con voz y voto en la asociación, participa en su gobernanza y puede ejercer un control democrático efectivo junto con los demás miembros. Sin dejar de lado lo relativo al compromiso social o motivación ciudadana, el modelo cooperativo también contempla la contribución a la comunidad para generar lazos de distinta naturaleza y la

reciprocidad necesaria para el intercambio de beneficios mutuos.

Para responder a estos aspectos resulta de particular importancia el diseño de contenidos curriculares básicos en las carreras de ciencias sociales y jurídicas, con la finalidad de tomar en cuenta la naturaleza diferente de una sociedad comercial convencional y una empresa cooperativa en la que no se maximiza el valor del accionista o los retornos, en proporción con el capital aportado, sino que se otorgan beneficios a sus asociados en proporción con las transacciones realizadas con la cooperativa. Traducidos en la gestión, los aportes monetarios no compran más control: las cooperativas son controladas democráticamente por sus asociados y las relaciones humanas, comunitarias y asociativas se encuentran por encima de las relaciones de propiedad.

Los aspectos precedentes pueden traducirse en contenidos curriculares específicos, congruentes con una realidad contextual y motivadores de la reflexión sobre el papel de las organizaciones de la esfera económica, entre las que se ubican las cooperativas. En esta dirección, el proceso de aprendizaje debería estimular el cuestionamiento de aquello que se asume como natural, brindar herramientas para descubrir la naturaleza y la orientación de las distintas organizaciones, ver desde nuevas perspectivas y desarrollar la capacidad de evaluar las reglas de la toma de decisiones y los criterios que prevalecen en la gestión y el control de las empresas.

Específicamente, las instituciones de educación superior argentinas —públicas y privadas— ofrecen dieciocho carreras orientadas al cooperativismo[5]. En la mayor parte, los contenidos curriculares están orientados a las competencias relativas al área de la gestión de la empresa cooperativa, con un relativo acercamiento a su dimensión social, a la luz de la organización empresarial. Existen también cátedras extracurriculares de cooperativismo concebidas a partir de actividades de proyección social, de carácter académico. Dichas cátedras, optativas para los estudiantes de ciencias económicas o jurídicas, se ofrecen para satisfacer necesidades de aprendizaje no sólo de los integrantes de la comunidad universitaria, sino de la sociedad en su conjunto.

Una de las acciones de apoyo convergentes con esta orientación fue implementada por una normativa del Ministerio de Educación en el año 2017 para la incorporación de contenidos curriculares sobre cooperativas y mutuales en las carreras de abogacía y de contador público (Lauritto, 2019). Esa iniciativa permitió que, en 2020, dos universidades nacionales y una editorial cooperativa, produjeran guías de estudio sobre las nociones básicas sobre cooperativas y mutuales orientadas a los estudiantes de dichas carreras. Las guías ofrecen un conjunto de referencias sustantivas sobre temas de índole jurídica, regulatoria, contable y tributaria que permiten caracterizar a las cooperativas y mutuales, diferenciándolas de otros tipos de empresas y asociaciones.

Aunque se aprecia la importancia de las experiencias precedentes y las diversas prácticas en este ámbito, subsiste el desafío del bajo reconocimiento que tiene este tipo de capacitación en los

5 El Ministerio de Educación de la Nación reconoce de manera oficial dos carreras de posgrado que ofrecen títulos de especialista y magister en una universidad de la provincia de Misiones, once carreras de pregrado que otorgan títulos de tecnicatura: dos con formación en la modalidad a distancia y nueve con modalidad presencial localizadas en la provincia de Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fe. De las cinco universidades que ofrecen carreras de grado (licenciaturas), cuatro están localizadas en la provincia de Santa Fe y una en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires (Dirección Nacional de Gestión Universitaria, 2022).

ámbitos de educación universitaria. Al respecto, es poco frecuente que se hable de las cooperativas en las escuelas de negocios, las facultades de derecho, las especializaciones en estudios organizacionales y en otras áreas de conocimiento pertinentes de la corriente de pensamiento dominante.

4. Producir instancias institucionales educativas a través de la extensión universitaria

Una de las experiencias iniciadoras de la extensión universitaria en el s. XIX fue propuesta por James Stuart en la carta que dirigió a los miembros de la Universidad de Cambridge para indicar la importancia de llevar los cursos de la universidad a regiones alejadas de la institución (Stuart, 1871). Su objetivo de difundir el conocimiento entre vastos sectores sociales, impedidos de alcanzarlo, estaba dirigido en especial "a las clases que más lo desearan y tuviesen imposibilidad para ello". La dedicación docente a la extensión y el presupuesto requerido para financiarla fueron destacados por Stuart al referir a una conversación sostenida con algunos miembros del Comité de Educación de la Sociedad de Pioneros Equitativos de Rochdale, que le habían expresado que "el organismo estaría dispuesto a garantizar £50 a £100 anuales para un plan de este tipo en su ciudad". (Stuart, 1871 p. 5–7)

La función de la extensión universitaria en Argentina se promovió en el marco de la política universitaria de inicios del s.XX y estuvo claramente influenciada por el positivismo. Recogió la orientación de filántropos anglosajones y socialistas fabianos dedicados a la promoción de la educación, para subrayar la búsqueda de una enseñanza de carácter científico basada en el modelo de "progreso social". Los proyectos de extensión desarrollados a partir de esa experiencia representan, por lo general, iniciativas que se proponen contribuir a una determinada transformación social. Están concebidos y desarrollados en torno a la noción de integralidad de las funciones universitarias que articulan extensión, investigación y enseñanza, disciplinas y saberes que involucran actores universitarios y no universitarios.

En ese contexto se inscribe la extensión universitaria vinculada con el cooperativismo. Está sostenida en opciones metodológicas complementarias, en algunos casos centrándose en contenidos sobre el tema (la gestión, el empleo, la gobernanza etc.) y en otros orientándose a resolver problemáticas de las cooperativas en ámbitos específicos[6]. El interés en valorizar las experiencias de las cooperativas e intercambiar ideas e informaciones sobre estas organizaciones mantuvo su vigencia través de expresiones de distinta naturaleza.

En las últimas décadas su desarrollo estuvo mayormente vinculado con experiencias del cooperativismo emergente, en particular cooperativas de trabajo y problemáticas de vulnerabilidad social, y en menor grado orientado a experiencias del cooperativismo tradicional, en particular en las universidades del interior del país.

En la amplia y diversa cantidad de iniciativas de extensión se destaca el desarrollo de un proyecto iniciado en 2015[7] que ha contribuido a visibilizar un conjunto de organizaciones que valorizan el patrimonio local, recuperan y preservan el trabajo asociativo, la herencia territorial y la identidad cooperativa. Se trata de la plataforma virtual *Ruta Argentina de las Cooperativas,* construida a partir de la incorporación de más de cien experiencias situadas en veinte provincias, categorizadas sobre un estándar común de criterios que utiliza como base un entorno compartido de colaboración. La plataforma difunde modelos de buenas prácticas productivas y asociativas, y desde su creación ha estimulado las acciones de una comunidad asociada a un proyecto que facilita las interacciones y el intercambio de ideas y realizaciones entre sus integrantes. Ello responde a la necesidad de hacer manifiestas las dimensiones propias de la identidad cooperativa, no siempre reconocida por la membrecía y el público en general, debido a que frecuentemente se tiende a transmitir una visión incompleta de los logros alcanzados, focalizando únicamente en los resultados de las actividades económicas desarrolladas por las cooperativas.

La plataforma virtual se interesa en valorizar la herencia económica y social de la cultura cooperativa argentina al identificar diversas iniciativas e ilustrarlas a través de experiencias concretas que favorecen el modelo cooperativo de empresa y su cultura. El objetivo es difundir que la identidad en una cooperativa está dada por la cercanía y la multidimensionalidad de las relaciones entre los asociados, que son usuarios y al mismo tiempo propietarios, parte de la estructura de la gobernanza, e integrantes del núcleo operativo.

Esta posición, al igual que otras iniciativas relacionadas con la extensión universitaria, han favorecido y ampliado en el medio el conocimiento de los rasgos organizativos que le confieren la identidad a las cooperativas como empresas de propiedad conjunta, cuya integridad como organizaciones autónomas e independientes radica en los valores cooperativos de autoayuda, responsabilidad propia y democracia.

5. Producir contenidos que permitan formar para la cooperación en las instituciones cooperativas y en las educativas

La función editorial, propia de quien descubre, propone y dirige la publicación de obras se manifiesta en la trayectoria de una empresa cooperativa creada en Buenos Aires en 1957. Sus antecedentes se vinculan con el desarrollo de tres destacadas experiencias asociativas del campo editorial que, en las décadas de 1910 y 1920, adoptaron "por necesidad" la fórmula cooperativa (Vuotto, 2021) y dejaron de tener continuidad hacia mediados de la década de 1950. Con este antecedente, a fines de 1957 un grupo de personas procedentes de diversos ámbitos institucionales, con intereses, motivaciones y compromisos convergentes en torno a la cooperación, creó la empresa Sociedad Ediciones Intercoop, con el propósito de "difundir la doctrina y la práctica del cooperativismo". Su propuesta editorial fue conducida por un pequeño grupo, que alentó la convicción de producir y publicar materiales sobre aquellos contenidos que constituyesen fórmulas eficaces de acción práctica y asegurasen la continuidad en el ciclo de vida editorial. Desde su

6 La primera experiencia de difusión de conocimientos sobre cooperativas por medio de la extensión universitaria tuvo lugar en la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas de la Universidad de Buenos Aires en el Instituto de Estudios Cooperativos creado en 1958 para contribuir a mejorar las condiciones de vida de las "clases laboriosas y dar soluciones prácticas a los problemas generales del país" (Aldrey, 1958, p.130).

7 El proyecto se concretó el marco de la línea de trabajo impulsada por el Ministerio de Educación de la Nación en 2014 para fortalecer el compromiso social de las universidades con la sociedad civil.

fundación, Intercoop ha consolidado en su desempeño cooperativo una condición profesional y un valor simbólico en el campo de la producción escrita sobre las cooperativas, al asegurar la publicación de textos dirigidos a distintos públicos. La transferencia de capital simbólico —mediante la edición de las obras reconocidas sobre el cooperativismo y la economía social, de autores argentinos y del exterior— y el principio de asegurar una política de "puertas abiertas" ha permitido crear espacios para que las prácticas y valores cooperativos encuentren oportunidades más amplias para su desarrollo progresivo.

La experiencia ilustra en el presente la naturaleza de una tradición editora independiente que con cuarenta entidades cooperativas asociadas sobresale por haber valorizado las iniciativas propositivas y la persistencia en ampliar y sostener numerosas vinculaciones institucionales en las que confluyen ideas, prácticas e intereses complementarios. En el marco de una estructura exigua, la cooperativa adopta las particularidades de una "economía voluntaria alternativa" que permite sostener los recursos que acompañan el trabajo interno, para asegurar la eficacia en el desempeño. En la función editorial combina el fuerte peso del trabajo voluntario, complementado con esquemas diversos como las prácticas profesionales, la contribución de becarios de investigación y de personas "amigas de la cooperación" dispuestas a colaborar.

Las vinculaciones con diversos ámbitos institucionales educativos han posibilitado que en su trayectoria de más de seis décadas, Intercoop persista en su interés de aproximar al autor con la cooperativa y con el público lector, para situar las obras y su contenido en el centro de su actividad.

En esa trayectoria, la gestión de Intercoop ha confrontado decisiones de diversa índole. Todas han conducido en mayor o menor grado a ponderar de manera equilibrada los aspectos propios de la sostenibilidad económica y la búsqueda de reconocimiento en términos de los objetivos originales de la editorial. La continuidad y la naturaleza de los compromisos expresa la legitimidad de la organización, entendida como un proceso en continuo desarrollo en el que se pueden identificar diferentes escenarios, en distintos momentos. En ellos sobresalen las decisiones conjuntas para asegurar el funcionamiento de la editora y el interés por conciliar también diversas modalidades de compromiso personal. Se trata de escenarios en los que prevalece la confianza que se pudo construir sobre la base de vínculos personales entre los miembros.

Un ciclo de vida organizacional que pone de manifiesto su legitimidad, sin soslayar la necesidad de volver a pensar el espacio que ocupa una editora en el movimiento cooperativo y la exigencia de evaluar el sentido de la propia identidad. Por esas razones, el principal esfuerzo radica en transitar con eficacia el estrecho sendero que concilia interés y desempeño, de modo de afrontar a la vez el problema de visibilidad, como el problema de recursos, sin perder de vista su misión.

Su aspiración radica en brindar al movimiento cooperativo y sus instituciones herramientas para acompañarlo en su trabajo de manera efectiva y producir publicaciones que garanticen que las organizaciones cooperativas puedan establecerse, gestionarse y funcionar mejor. En síntesis, un propósito orientado al desarrollo de la identidad cooperativa que procura facilitar la participación activa en las relaciones e instituciones cooperativas, dentro de los ámbitos de trabajo y más allá de ellos.

6. Conclusión ¿Qué transmiten los aprendizajes para la cooperación?

La multiplicidad de aspectos que contienen las iniciativas que se han caracterizado en el artículo, se hace eco de la diversidad de áreas en las que trabajan las cooperativas y de la amplia variedad de propósitos y modos de acción que ellas expresan cuando se trata de profundizar en la identidad cooperativa. Cada nueva experiencia edifica sobre la previa para enriquecer un tejido de vinculaciones y realizaciones que nunca concluyen.

Ellas reflejan en conjunto, por una parte, la naturaleza de un tipo de estructura en cuyo centro están las personas y por otra, las relaciones que se construyen como la razón de ser de la identidad cooperativa: el sentido de la "asociación y la empresa" y la respuesta a las aspiraciones y necesidades sociales y culturales comunes. Esto las distingue de otras formas de organización y les permite crear incentivos y recompensas para que las relaciones cooperativas favorezcan a sus miembros y los estimulen para protegerlas.

En esta perspectiva, las experiencias en la esfera educativa configuran también valiosas oportunidades para la construcción de ciudadanía y la convivencia entre pares que estimula el desarrollo de habilidades sociales, la integración de las diferencias y la participación en el trabajo asociativo.

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Tools for Strengthening the Cooperative Identity

Outils de renforcement de l'identité coopérative
Herramientas para reforzar la identidad cooperativa

Inclusive Governance and Enterprise Sustainability: Developing New Tools for Member Participation

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Inclusive Governance and Enterprise Sustainability: Developing New Tools for Member Participation

Abstract

This article examines participatory projects that were identified, developed and implemented within a network of Italian social cooperatives focusing on work integration. The paper focuses in particular on the organizational processes and schemes that promote the active involvement of cooperative members, beyond the existence of formal governance structures and management bodies. The article is excerpted and adapted from the paper "Governing and Organizing for Participation and Engagement. What Can We Learn from Social Cooperation?", published by the same authors in the journal Studi Organizzativi (vol. 1, 2022).

Gouvernance inclusive et durabilité des entreprises : développement de nouveaux outils pour la participation des membres

Résumé

Cet article examine certains projets participatifs qui ont été identifiés, développés et mis en œuvre au sein d'un réseau de coopératives sociales italiennes axées sur l'intégration professionnelle. L'article se concentre en particulier sur les processus organisationnels et les schémas qui favorisent l'implication active des membres de la coopérative, au-delà de l'existence de structures formelles de gouvernance et d'organes de gestion. L'article est extrait et adapté du document « Governing and Organizing for Participation and Engagement. What Can We Learn from Social Cooperation? », publié par les mêmes auteurs dans la revue Studi Organizzativi (vol. 1, 2022).

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Gobernanza Inclusiva y Sostenibilidad Empresarial: Desarrollo de Nuevas Herramientas para la Participación de los Miembros

Resumen

Este artículo examina una selección de proyectos participativos identificados, desarrollados y aplicados en una red de cooperativas sociales italianas centradas en la integración laboral. El artículo se centra en particular en los procesos y esquemas organizativos que promueven la participación activa de los cooperativistas, más allá de la existencia de estructuras formales de gobernanza y órganos de gestión. El artículo es un extracto y una adaptación del documento «Governing and Organizing for Participation and Engagement. What Can We Learn from Social Cooperation?», publicado por los mismos autores en la revista Studi Organizzativi (vol. 1, 2022).

1. Introduction

Inclusive governance, in the form of democratic participation of the members in the decision-making process, is a key element of the cooperative identity. Members' participation in the governance process can be a critical issue, though, especially in larger organizations. The research on this matter has focused primarily on the formal governance structure of cooperative enterprises, but there is ample room for research and experimentation on innovative mechanisms and processes that can facilitate participation and inclusion at all levels of the decision-making process. There is evidence that an inclusive governance that fosters the participation of members and other stakeholders can translate to greater enterprise sustainability, combining economic growth with the primacy of people's needs and the generation of social value (Sacchetti and Borzaga, 2020). It is an issue that has become even more pressing in the wake of the COVID pandemic and the current period of economic uncertainty, which will require greater resiliency on the part of cooperative enterprises as well as the ability to tap material and immaterial resources (including competences, knowledge and motivation) from within their membership base.

The governance of cooperation-based organizations lends itself by nature to an in-depth examination of the role of inclusion and of participation and to an analysis of the results that these organizational solutions produce for the people involved, for the enterprise and for the community at large. The Coase theory of the firm correlates several possible governance solutions with their ability to include and involve business stakeholders and promote collective interest, thus producing positive externalities in the case of inclusion and negative ones if stakeholders are excluded from the governance of the organization (Sacchetti and Sugden, 2003; Sacchetti, 2015; Sacchetti and Borzaga, 2020; Sacchetti and Catturani, 2021; Santos, 2012).

Among cooperatives, the experience of social cooperatives is particularly interesting in this regard, as inclusiveness and participation are at the core of the organizational structures of these enterprises and the foundation of their ability to create value. In Italy, the growth of social cooperatives has been facilitated by the specific effort of the regulator to recognise this cooperative form with the Law 381/1991, which extended the range of the beneficiaries of cooperatives to people outside of their membership base and especially to disadvantaged users. One of the key aspects that distinguish social cooperatives is inclusive governance, which is particularly important for these cooperatives for several reasons. One is that the aims of social cooperatives do not overlap with the creation of benefits for their members. The second aspect is that inclusivity offers a guarantee that multiple interests are taken into account in the decision-making processes (Sacchetti, 2015). Thirdly, inclusivity may foster innovations since it activates the material and immaterial resources of participants.

However, while inclusion can be defined at the statutory level, its implementation requires specific organisational capabilities. Our enquiry thus focuses on the applied methods that can be used to create the conditions for participation, focusing not only on the management bodies but also - if not mostly - on the organizational processes and schemes that promote stakeholder empowerment and active involvement.

Building on the experience of Rete CAUTO – a consortium of work integration social cooperatives located in Lombardy (Italy) – this study explores how social cooperatives can build, in practice, a culture towards aims of inclusion. We are particularly interested in presenting the experiences that were implemented within Rete CAUTO to build a culture of participation among their main internal stakeholder (workers) since this step is deemed to be functional for learning a culture of participation inside the organisation and extending it eventually to other stakeholders. Since cooperatives are typically single-stakeholder organisations (alternatively workers, users, producers, depending on the type of cooperative) that can usefully extend their competence in activating participatory dynamics to other stakeholders, it is especially useful to start from an analysis of the participatory worker practices introduced at CAUTO. Their applicability to other stakeholders could then be tested with further research.

To this end, the article is structured in three parts: the first part describes the Rete CAUTO case study, starting with a brief description of the network's history and organizational model and then examining the main participation projects that were implemented, which involved both workers and external stakeholders. In the second part of the paper, we focus on select organizational procedures and tools that made effective participation possible in the formerly illustrated projects, with particular attention to the aspects that determined their feasibility. The third and final part contains observations on the more replicable elements stemming from the case study and on their implications, and their implications for the study of participation and inclusive governance. The article is excerpted and adapted from a full paper (Sacchetti, Pasinetti, Rocca and Bodini, 2022) that can be consulted for a more in-depth analysis of the theoretical background of the research.

2. Organizational strategy to build participatory culture. A case study of work integration social enterprise Rete CAUTO

2.1 Rete CAUTO: an overview

Rete CAUTO is a network of enterprises established by stipulating a specific network contract pursuant to art. 3, paragraph 4-ter of the Law Decree n. 5/2009. This type of contract in Italy is designed to enable collaboration and cooperation among companies while maintaining their independence and autonomy. The contract defines shared objectives and projects among the participating enterprises, in order to increase competitiveness and innovative capacity.

Rete CAUTO is made up of three social cooperatives (CAUTO, Cantiere del Sole and Medicus Mundi Equipment) and a consortium of social cooperatives (CantierAperto). All of these organizations focus on the integration of disadvantaged workers into the world of work. Based in Brescia, Italy, Rete CAUTO now employs nearly 500 people and has a turnover of about 25 million euros. The network carries out a wide variety of functions, combining operational activity with highly specialized and diversified planning, training and consultancy services. All share the same entrepreneurial vision that focuses on integrated sustainability by bringing together attention to the environment and to social inclusion. CAUTO's services (local recycling, waste management, environmental policy, etc.) are almost exclusively offered within the territorial boundaries of the Province of Brescia and a significant organizational effort is needed to coordinate headquarters, mobile services and local services dislocated throughout the province.

An overview of Rete CAUTO's history sheds light on the key moments in the network's evolution.

- The social cooperative CAUTO was founded in 1995;

- The other social cooperatives and the consortium that make up the network were established to satisfy specific organizational and commercial needs in the following years (2003 and 2004). In particular, while CAUTO focuses primarily on waste management, Cantiere del Sole was created to provide environmental services in the energy sector, Medicus Mundi equipment specializes in the recovery of electro-medical equipment and medical devices, and CantierAperto provides support services to its member companies (including the three participating in Rete CAUTO) related to the participation in public calls for tenders;

- Rete CAUTO was formally born in 2014, taking on the name of the mother company. The goals were to promote and strengthen the existing bonds and collaboration between the founding organizations and to simplify management and procedures that were transversal between the different companies;

- Over the years, the network has continued to grow steadily in terms of its workforce, almost doubling its employees since 2010;

- The percentage of disadvantaged workers has always stayed well above 30%, which is the minimum rate established by Law 381/91 to retain the status of work integration social cooperative. On 31 December 2020, the percentage of disadvantaged workers was 41.9%;

- Over the last 10 years, Rete CAUTO has radically modified its governance structure, with changes taking place in three successive phases, as detailed in the table below;

Table 1. Evolution of governance structure and organizational culture (2010-2020)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Staff	236	273	304	331	362	386	427	453	455	471	466
Organizational Structure	Traditional BoD (political, strategic and operational role).			BoD + Directors with no formal mandates or redefined areas of action.			BoD + Managing Director + Steering Committee, consisting of Area Directors with formal mandates and with clear and explicit redefinition of the specific areas of action.				
Organizational Culture	Do (a lot and with innovation).			Do & let people know (communicate).			Do, let people know, know what to do (planning and choosing) & make others do (structured empowerment process and participation).				

The organizational model at the foundation of Rete CAUTO that informs the network's ideas and actions is the product of the stratification of years of experiences, reinterpretations and lessons learned in decision-making and operational processes within the various cooperatives of the network. In the past 6 to 8 years, the governance structures and organizational tools of Rete CAUTO were defined and structured while, at the same time, a business strategy geared at project participation was consolidated at various levels and applied in defining operational practices as well as in developing innovative strategies and vision. This approach was greatly fostered by creating specific organizational devices that have undoubtedly aided in generating and disseminating the participatory processes.

The first organizational device was the creation of a well-defined and organized Communications Department. Formally established in 2013, the office initially focused on identifying and crafting coherent communication messages that would also help the new department in making itself visible and recognized within the organization. Since its creation, the Communications Department has grown and evolved: it has now become the vital hub of the entire network and its importance is reflected in the role it plays in the organization's external positioning. In effect, the communication office translates the value produced by the cooperative not only in terms of marketing but also in terms of dissemination of the organization's mission and its social impact.

While building up the Communications Department, Rete CAUTO started exploring the issues of integration and capitalization of information. This led to doing away with a plurality of softwares designed to manage individual areas of operation such as administration, human resources, waste management and so on, and to invest instead in the development of proprietary softwares. The new softwares was not to be seen only as a tool, but rather the approach was to focus on the integration of tools, processes and organizational strategies. Softwares development is still ongoing and the process has undeniably fostered the internal dissemination of information, generated greater knowledge and awareness and has become an organizational asset.

Third, the Human Resources Department adopted new criteria for personnel selection to ensure early talent identification and recruitment and to enrich the organization with new skills and work approaches. In order to do so, HR had to stop using some of its previous assessment parameters and started to focus more on candidates' values or presumed affinity with the mission of the organization rather than on their specific competences. Furthermore, the integration of skills and motivations constituted an opportunity to enhance the profile and curricula diversity of the 500 employees that were part of the Rete CAUTO network and represented a chance to address the topics and issues relevant to the organization in a participatory way. To this end, the evaluation of new perspective employees was based not only on technical skills but also on soft and relational skills. This applied in particular to middle management roles, in which good technical abilities are not enough. Rather, the expectation is that people in these positions are able to engage and participate in their own working groups as well as in transversal working groups.

2.2 Participation by Projects: classification

Right from the start, the network adopted an approach based on projects when dealing with the theme of participation, taking for granted the discussion on the value of participation and favouring a more pragmatic stance. The aim was to make participation a concrete experience within a framework defined by real objects of common work that were perceived as priorities, given that they represented a problem and/or a development opportunity for those same working groups that were involved in the process. Bearing in mind the evolutionary process described above, in recent years Rete CAUTO has designed and implemented a variety of heterogeneous participatory projects; fifteen experiences in all which in aggregate involved over 200 workers.

These concrete participation opportunities promoted a constructive and creative exchange of ideas in highly heterogeneous working groups whose members were very different in terms of professional role, positioning, work age, skills and vision. Indeed, participation in projects trickled down and spread to different levels of the organization, without favouring one over another. In order to classify these experiences, which in turn will make clearer and more explicit the vast ramifications of adopting a participatory approach in an organization, we have identified four areas of practices: operational participation, strategic participation, identity participation and innovation participation.

2.2.1 Operational Participation Projects

Operational participation projects combine the solving of issues confronted daily in an organization's operational life together with a bottom-up approach, in which the workers' knowledge of the problem is considered a fundamental element to finding an answer. Operational participation projects usually play out in the short term and result in concrete and material outcomes, such as the drafting/modification of procedures and regulations, the creation of goods or the introduction/modification of services.

Many such projects were launched by Rete CAUTO over the years, and each had its origins in the identification of a deficiency or a concrete need. Here are some significant examples:

- Identifying the most suitable models of safety shoes to carry out selected tasks. This multi-phase project aimed to maximize worker satisfaction in this aspect, enabling them to take center stage in making a choice with direct consequences on their working well-being. Other actors included the Purchasing Office, the Health & Safety Office, the RLS (Workers' Safety Representatives), the Warehouse Manager (in charge of managing the safety shoes with cost-related implications) and a group of operators and foremen from five different operating sectors within the CAUTO network.

- Selecting the best uniforms for workers carrying out certain types of services such as clearing out, moving and office cleaning. The participatory project addressed the need to combine uniform functionality and practicality with aspects linked to company image and ensured that the two elements would not conflict. The process involved operators, foremen, coordinators, the heads of the pertinent operational sectors, the Communication Department and the Purchasing Office.

- Identifying the equipment necessary to optimize work on a specific site and to reduce the on-site staff's physical effort. Bringing together the many actors of Rete CAUTO was key in building a real project modulated in phases and actions assessing the many elements to be taken into consideration in choosing the gear. The decision-making involved the sector's operational director, manager, coordinator and foreman who are the main protagonists of a construction site, as they know the work and the related load on the staff. The purchasing office weighed in for its interaction with potential suppliers and the demand to satisfy specific requests, the technical office was in charge of verifying that the proposed equipment was compatible with the site authorizations and the commercial office communicated with the customer owner of the site that was undergoing these changes.

- Designing and implementing

CAUTOWelcome, an onboarding tool for new hires to assist in transferring information both of organizational nature and on the company vision (corporate culture). The project was launched due to the rapid staff increase in the CAUTO Network and the significant organizational changes that followed. The consequent need was to standardize and streamline the transfer of information in the entry phase. The project lasted seven months and was carried out with the participation of six "new hires" with less than a year of seniority in the CAUTO Network, involving the General Manager as well as the Communications Department, the Legal and Security Department and the Human Resources Department.

Operational participation is a key phase in rooting the culture of project participation within an organization. On the one hand, it makes more concrete a concept that too often is dealt with from a theoretical or value-based point of view. On the other hand, operational participation generates tangible results in terms of outputs like decision-making processes, service procedures or guidelines which quite often improve the quality of working life of those involved, as well as of larger worker groups. Finally, this type of participation enables every employee to come into play as a competent subject on the task at hand and fosters a dialogue among equals, albeit between people with very different histories, positions and characteristics. Depending on the type of project, different types of engagement methods could be adopted, including assemblies, individual consultations, and small or medium-sized working groups.

2.2.2 Strategic Participation Projects

Strategic participation projects address the need to develop and articulate a more systemic vision of the organization and can blend together views and expectations that are different because of role, history, competence, points of view, etc. These issues are central to the life, development and well-being of the organization itself and of the people it employs Strategic participation projects focus on transversal issues that involve the organization as a whole and develop a constantly evolving process that in the medium to long term defines shared frameworks of meaning. These projects generally strengthen inclusive governance within the organization itself. The two most notable experiences of strategic participation in the Rete CAUTO network, on the one hand, dealt with the process of defining procedures, tools and - above all – performance evaluation areas for the personnel and, on the other, focused on improving worker satisfaction.

The first project, aimed at redefining staff evaluation criteria, was launched in 2014 and involved members of the Human Resources Department, Sector Managers, Coordinators, Area Directors and the General Manager. In addition to implementing an explicit, homogeneous, structured and integrated personnel assessment system within the management of the cooperative, strategic participation enabled the creation of "a culture of evaluation" and aided in taking apart many stereotypes on what should be evaluated, placing increasingly more emphasis on relational and communication skills rather than just on technical knowledge.

The "Satisfaction Project", on the other hand, was the most challenging participation experience undertaken by Rete CAUTO both in terms of investment and of complexity. The project kicked off in 2016 and wrapped up in 2019. Its general goal was to analyse and define a path to improve worker satisfaction using the following tools:

- Identifying how CAUTO employees define satisfaction and discovering which are the variables that influence it. This process revealed that satisfaction variables included sharing and access to information, trust in the organization, health and safety, performance assessment, remuneration, professional growth and training, relationships, sense of belonging, welfare and discrimination;

- Measuring the current level of worker satisfaction adopting the above-mentioned variables by designing and distributing an ad hoc survey (definition of the AS-IS scenario);

- Identifying, structuring and planning out the improvement actions geared at improving worker satisfaction (definition of the TO-BE scenario);

- Bridging the gap between the cooperative and its workers by introducing a bottom-up approach when addressing the issue of "Satisfaction" – a radical departure from the prior top-down vision; and by directly involving more than sixty workers in all project phases under the banner of active participation, awareness and co-responsibility.

The planning of the course to follow was the result of an internal debate chaired by the General Manager with the contributions of the Steering Committee, the Human Resources Department, the Communication Department and the Head of the Integrated System. Other vital elements in the design phase included the extensive analysis of relevant literature and case studies on employee satisfaction and the support of a consulting firm that supported Rete CAUTO in the drafting and editing phase of the project.

2.2.3. Identity Participation Projects

Identity participation projects explore and link the different governance dimensions of an organization. Their mostly intangible and cultural work objects prompt one to question the experience acquired and the organization's development. Many of the initiatives that are participatory or defined as participatory fall into the category of identity participation projects, particularly in third sector organizations.

Over the years, Rete CAUTO has focused less on this type of project, probably due to the organization's participation approach that is geared more toward "concrete actions" and thus also tied to the positive externalities related to project outcomes.

The member campaign launched by the Board of Directors in 2017 falls, however, under this category. The theme of the project was identified and drafted by the members themselves and scheduled for 2017-2018. The list of selected topics included CAUTO network's history, regulatory aspects, narration and exchange of experiences with other social cooperatives, study of and open debate on the founding principles contained in the Statute and discussion on the identity of present members. To ensure concrete involvement and participation, it was immediately determined that each session should be preceded by preparatory meetings open to all members of the CAUTO network. With the support of the Communications Department, the BoD took on the responsibility of carrying out on an ongoing basis the decisions taken by the member base during the preparatory meetings. In terms of output, the most important aspect that emerged was the member base demand to be acquainted with a draft of the BoD's strategic program in advance, that is to say with enough time to allow members to put forth their ideas, proposals and candidacies for possible inclusion in the program itself, or alternative venues. Even in this case, participation and involvement went beyond being declarations of intent and became operating practices, approaching the theme of political engagement of members as owners of the cooperative. In fact, identity participation projects focus on the definition, actualization and implementation of the constitutive values of the cooperative and have, as the main purpose, bringing workers closer to the political-institutional dimension of the company.

2.2.4. Innovation Participation Projects

This category includes projects targeted at creating and/or developing products or services offered by Rete CAUTO. In this case, participation becomes the key element of open innovation and often adopts tools that are typical of service design. Innovation participation offers workers both the possibility of improving what is already in place and the opportunity to imagine themselves as possible beneficiaries of the services. This type of project includes experiences where the role and participation of external stakeholders become critical in order to achieve a common goal, be they entities and/or individuals.

The first Innovation participation project implemented by Rete CAUTO concerned the building and modelling of the Isola del Riuso® (Re-Use Island); service that is currently ongoing but that was tested for the first time in 2013. The Isola del Riuso is the experimentation of a zero-waste area included in recycling centers that helps recover furniture and objects that can still have a second life preventing them from becoming waste.

In addition to various offices and sectors within the CAUTO network, the participatory process also involved institutional stakeholders of the Province of Brescia and of the Region of Lombardy with the goal of implementing an initiative to curtail waste production by transforming collection into a service to the community, thus responding in an innovative way to legal constraints that limit the purpose of municipal collection centres solely to waste disposal. The Re-Use Island solution presented several advantages:

- *For the Municipality:* waste reduction and related disposal costs, increased ethical value of actions leading to not wasting resources, education for the common good, possible disbursement of social bonuses to be allocated to people in financial difficulty;

- *For Citizens & Environment:* concrete, practical and simple actions of solidarity, no resource waste, witnessing that their disposed of and donated goods can be reused rather than irreparably destroyed;

- *For CAUTO:* recovery of materials that can be reused in perfect alignment with the network's statutory principles: job creation, particularly for those involved in work integration, environmental protection and circular economy.

After that first experience, the network has made enhancing participation to imagine, define and experiment with new services an innovation practice, strengthening its departments with more and more technical and planning skills. This, in turn, made it possible to experiment with multi-stakeholder service design actions such as the Banco di Comunità (Community Counter), an innovative hybrid social space in which people can both exchange second-hand objects and take part in the inclusion process, participating in training workshops or meetings and experimenting volunteering or job training.

This CAUTO network service combines attention to the environment, grounded on the principles of recycling and reuse, with the desire to respond to emerging social needs: in a nutshell, a place where people can share the use of objects and build new relationships. The Community Counter was originally created as an experiment based on the experience of Re-Use Island and by collaborating with entities that were active in the social, public and private sectors. Today, Banco di Comunità is a registered trademark of Rete CAUTO and is present in the Provinces of Brescia, Mantua and Verona.

3. Systemic factors and functional structures to foster participation

Following the implementation of the various projects described above, there have been several changes within the organization. In terms of outputs, there are now new communication tools that were developed through participatory co-design projects, new procedures resulting from participatory projects, as well as worker satisfaction and evaluation systems that were developed by the workers themselves. This strengthens significantly the sense of belonging for those involved, as confirmed by the interviews that were conducted for this research.

The implementation of these participatory projects also contributed to strengthening the relational and soft skills of the middle management, to the benefit not only of the individuals involved but also of the entire organization. Indeed, it is more frequent now to have collective decision-making within departments or offices, through the activation of working groups and/or the involvement of individual colleagues.

Overall, there is more participation now within the cooperative, around well-defined objectives centred on problem-solving or opportunities. The individual participatory projects are increasingly part of an overall strategy that generates other participatory projects, thus expanding the number of people that are directly involved.

Examining the organizational strategy leading to the participation practices implemented by the cooperative shows that certain contextual and organizational elements have promoted the rooting and expansion of aspects of participatory projects within the cooperative itself.

The first behavioural precondition is the choice of investing in legitimation and role empowerment coupled with the definition of a clear governance structure, which has allowed and continues to allow the organization to "express" itself as a whole and also as the sum of the many subjects that compose it (the people). Legitimacy and clarity are the results of appropriate organizational structures which require ongoing maintenance and at the same time a strategic awareness about the functions and interactions between the different sectors of Rete CAUTO.

Moreover, the formalization of delegation mechanisms and the increased awareness of the various responsibilities that go with them, especially at a top management level, have constituted an incentive for the creation of participation and involvement processes. The top-down logic in which top management has a "sole decision maker" role is set aside, enabling the organization to shift towards a widespread decision-making capacity. This, on the one hand, helped Rete CAUTO break down problems and thus minimize their impact whilst increasing co-responsibility. On the other hand, the formalization of delegation mechanisms encouraged a widespread search for solutions, boosting the use of creativity. In this context, the individual with responsibility is not the one who has to solve problems directly or that has to identify strategic mandates one by one. The person with responsibility is the individual who is able of creating the organizational conditions that are suitable for developing collaborative solutions and strategies.

Creating true participatory processes has meant and still entails open to those involved freely expressing their opinions (on the theme, the scope, the issue) within a defined framework, promoting autonomy, competence and relationality; freedom of expression, not always free of conflict, that may lead quite far from the direction the organization itself initially thought of pursuing. Furthermore, for individuals to express their thoughts with fullness and awareness, it is imperative that they feel empowered to voice their opinions. At the same time, it is equally necessary for them

to have a clear understanding of their own positioning and identity, that is to say "who they are" within the organization, where they are located, what links them to other parts of the organization and what rules govern these interconnections. If the right conditions are not created for this to happen, participation of individuals runs the risk of being severely compromised or of becoming merely "defensive" or "instrumental".

The second behavioural precondition concerns the architecture of knowledge within an organization, both for what pertains to internal communication processes and as applied to information and skill creation through training. Throughout the CAUTO network experience and in specific phases of the organization's history, the information and cognitive asymmetry threatened entire paths of participation because of inadequate governance structures and/or lack of tools and skills. As stated above, in addition to having a clear idea of "who they are" in the organization, individuals must be encouraged to express themselves; knowing and understanding what the organization communicates, desires and thinks helps the individuals to express themselves not just as individuals but also as a fundamental and substantial part of the organization. If, on the other hand, organizational processes, skills and information become a tool of exclusion - albeit unwittingly, - the people within the organization will lack empowerment and participation: it is therefore essential that the architecture of company knowledge become an accessible and collective asset.

Nowadays, promoting a participatory culture within Rete CAUTO, and we venture to say also in other companies, does not solely constitute an organizational strategy, but increasingly also becomes a business and development tool for the different areas and services offered.

These systemic considerations that stem from the lessons learned from the CAUTO case study may be of assistance both in implementing an overall organizational strategy and in understanding the classification of the participatory projects that can be carried out.

4. Discussion and implications

The contribution that the experience of the CAUTO network can offer to the debate on inclusive governance relates to the connection between a managerial strategy oriented toward the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders and the application of a methodological approach geared toward developing learning elements based on behavioural assumptions. On the one hand, this strategy, recalling Hymer (1972) and Cowling and Sugden (1998), has focused prevalently on the operational level, i.e. the level at which projects are executed and monitored (as distinct from the strategic and coordination levels, which attain to the setting of goals and to the decisions on what projects should be implemented to achieve those goals). Consistently, if we consider Gandz and Bird's (1996) idea of empowerment, CAUTO's approach has focused mostly on empowering workers with respect to their participation in the definition and self-management of specific day-to-day issues. On the other hand, the most strategic level of empowerment is related to the definition of access to strategic control. At the structural level, CAUTO's governance remains essentially mono-stakeholder, with workers as the main stakeholder. However, their factual participation and sense of belonging to the organisation should not be taken for granted. Consistent with the cooperative nature of CAUTO, the strategic level was supported by projects aimed at moving from a right to take part in assemblies to strengthening worker participation in the definition of broad organisational issues, sense-making and identity, which was then reflected in the workers' involvement in the definition of criteria for the evaluation of their own job satisfaction.

Overall, participatory projects that replicate similar implementation designs on different themes facilitate learning and empowerment for the involved stakeholders, who can thus contribute as stakeholders and at the same engage in a process of strengthening and self-realization of their abilities and of their personal, professional and organizational knowledge. Participatory processes thus become at the same time goal and instrument that is functional to eventually extend access to governance bodies.

The Rete CAUTO allows us to extract some useful learning points aimed at making the model transferable, lessons that are particularly useful for companies who intend to implement participation based on the implementation of families of projects that will impact both the internal and external context of the organization.

We should also highlight that within CAUTO, the penetration and diffusion of participatory approaches did not take place by implementing a structured program, i.e., by adopting a linear and consequential planning methodology. Rather, changes took place step by step, by implementing experimental participatory projects that were quite different with regard to their theme, composition, number of involved employees and final output.

Based on the lessons learned from the CAUTO network case study, it seems that the feasibility of true participatory actions is based on at least four dimensions. These are: organizational feasibility, legal feasibility, technical feasibility and financial feasibility.

When addressing organizational feasibility, it is fundamental to have a governance structure that can harness the collective intelligence of the organization and that is inserted in a clear and transparent framework for what pertains to the decision-making processes and definition of roles. As seen above, the organizational changes that took place in Rete CAUTO during the years when the participation processes were just rooted proved to be the foundation that enabled work paths to be opened and consequently promote a cultural change that took place within the organization. Transparency goes hand in hand with a clear definition of roles, with the capacity to explain the contents and objectives of the decision-making process as well as the ability to define effective roles for the implementation of the various processes and projects. For this reason, organizational feasibility can probably be more easily reached in medium and large-sized companies, be they cooperatives or not, where transparency and role distribution must be well organized because of their size. Conversely, this type of feasibility is more complex and challenging in small to medium-sized organizations, where overlapping roles and confused decision-making processes can be a real hindrance, both in the start-up phase - due to the desire to keep control - and because of excessive simplification - due to wanting everyone to be involved.

Legal feasibility depends on the coherence of governance structures and legal forms, including, for instance, the formalization of proxies, the creation of a dualistic system, the founding of a consortium or the adoption of a "light" network contract without legal personality. These legal tools can implement appropriate forms of governance at different scales, from small companies to larger ones all the way up to more complex partnerships between different companies. Even something as simple as the formalization of proxies, that could be taken for granted or seem of little importance, is key as it makes the decision-making processes operational and transparent. The more complex and inter-organizational instruments

become particularly valuable tools to reach cost optimization and efficiency and in developing integrated and system-wide products and services but can also represent an opportunity to pool professional and transversal skills within a community of interest and to activate participatory processes.

At the level of technical feasibility, the presence of professional profiles with solid organizational and transversal skills, particularly negative skills (Lazzara, 1993) in top management and governance roles are absolutely necessary. This ensures the effective management and coordination of complex processes characterized by structural uncertainties and the ability to deal with criticism and/or failure. Indeed, the issue of soft skills nowadays carries an ever-increasing weight in managerial trends, talent research and recruitment. Our case study also highlights how these soft skills must be present in the top roles of an organization, how management must be able to question the culture acquired over time and then handed down and how individuals must be able to contend with the uncertainty of being able to reach the goal that was initially hypothesized. The presence of these professional profiles in middle management is the condition sine qua non to build participation. Such professional profiles must be integrated by at least one pilot group within the base of the organization that is enterprising and responds to the proposals, and that can act as a niche incubator for change. In this respect, change seems possible only if the organization is able to identify and value agents of change, regardless of their hierarchical role. These are individuals who are able to root change and to transform it into a structural and necessary step on the path towards the organization's sustainability and development. Given these factors, the implementation process must be gradual, both in terms of timing and of methods of involvement.

Financial feasibility depends on the ability to invest the resources that are required by this type of participatory projects. Working by projects gave the company the opportunity to pursue its overall vision and at the same time make targeted and timely investments in the achievement of specific goals. In the case of CAUTO, the ratio between money invested in the projects and overall personnel costs during the project execution time constituted the indicator that was adopted to assess the economic investment in participatory processes. This numeric value was designed as an internal investment indicator and was intended to serve as a general comparison parameter. The average percentage across projects was stable at 1-2% and could be further reduced in the case of voluntary participation. The ratio is above all a useful indicator to address concretely the costs of participation, which are often overestimated by organizations resisting the adoption of a participatory approach.

This specific indicator of financial feasibility should be analysed in the context of a broader vision of sustainability that places a value on investing in participatory projects, also by readdressing other types of costs. Clearly, timely budgeting is fundamental in the definition, design and planning phases of such projects.

Sustainability cannot, however, be clearly predicted and/or estimated at the beginning of these projects, but can only be monitored, promoted and assessed ex-post. The CAUTO network case study underlined how projects had grown wider in breadth and complexity over time. At the same time, the individuals who had participated in multiple projects constitute that niche change group mentioned above when speaking about technical feasibility.

If we look at sustainability from this perspective and also analyse the return on investment, it becomes clear that these families of projects promote the acquisition of transversal skills among members, workers and stakeholders that can be useful when inhabiting change.

As illustrated previously, participation can indeed generate changed contexts as an outcome. In particular, these transversal skills include adaptability, flexibility and resilience: attitudes that should increasingly be valued and cultivated in organizational contexts that are rapidly changing for reasons that may be endogenous and exogenous to the enterprise.

5. Conclusion

Based on the evidence and considerations above, it is clear that concrete inclusive governance stems from a convergence between formal governance structures - that afford the needed institutional framework - organizational processes - that "lay the groundwork" for and nurture participation - information feedback systems, learning and skills creation practices, as well as specific actions to monitor and emphasize the results obtained over time.

Additional and more intangible factors are also key in building inclusive governance and these include the organizational culture and the inclination to evaluate and/or adjust governance, bearing in mind that changes in the organizational structures in place may occur over time and in different areas of activity.

Finally, it appears important to identify select common elements which may link together the different participation tools that are activated over time and that may assist in establishing a managerial culture in line with inclusive governance. If such shared common elements are absent or poorly structured, the risk is that participation tools be diminished to management "gadgets" incapable of significantly shaping the underlying organizational cultures, thereby limiting their innovation potential.

These reflections could contribute to a field of research that studies in depth the relationship between inclusive governance structures, organizational practices and effective participation at different decision-making levels. Enterprises with an explicit social mission, such as social cooperatives, should have an advantage in this respect, given their capacity to promote inclusiveness and precisely because of their distinctive governance features.

This working hypothesis must, however, be validated through studies that identify dissimilarities and analogies in the solutions adopted by social cooperatives, as well as through comparative analyses that juxtapose the participatory solutions introduced in the social cooperation sector with those in place in the for-profit sector.

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Perceived Cooperative Member Value – The Case of German Cooperative Banks

Svenja Damberg[1]

Perceived Cooperative Member Value – The Case of German Cooperative Banks

Abstract

This pre-study looks at the cooperative orientation of cooperative banks as perceived by their customer-members, i.e., perceived cooperative member value, to gain a better understanding of its dimensions and ideas for a potential operationalization of the concept. Although there is a long tradition of cooperative literature and an extensive amount of conceptual and qualitative papers on cooperatives, to the author's best knowledge, the cooperative theory lacks a clear approach to measure the cooperative identity and orientation of cooperative businesses. This study attempts to combine various methods, by first conceptually collecting the various dimensions of cooperative orientation from extant literature, comparing them with the official statements, and conducting in-depth interviews with cooperative experts from the banking sector. The data are analyzed to identify the various dimensions of cooperative orientation, develop items, with the goal of later establishing an operationalizable construct. The results can be used and tested in future studies on cooperative enterprises, and thereby have implications for both cooperative theory and practice.

Keywords: cooperative identity, cooperative orientation, cooperative principles, cooperative values, member value

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La valeur perçue par les membres des coopératives - Le cas des banques coopératives allemandes

Résumé

Ce projet de recherche examine l'orientation coopérative des banques coopératives telle qu'elle est perçue par leurs clients-membres, c'est-à-dire la valeur coopérative perçue par les membres, afin d'acquérir une meilleure compréhension de ses dimensions et des idées pour une opérationnalisation potentielle du concept. Bien qu'il existe une longue tradition de littérature coopérative et un grand nombre d'articles conceptuels et qualitatifs sur les coopératives, à la connaissance de l'auteur, la théorie coopérative manque d'une approche claire sur la façon de mesurer l'identité et l'orientation coopératives des entreprises coopératives. Cette étude tente de combiner plusieurs méthodes, en commençant par rassembler de manière conceptuelle les différentes dimensions de l'orientation coopérative à partir de la littérature existante, en les comparant aux déclarations officielles et en menant des entretiens approfondis avec des experts coopératifs du secteur bancaire. Les données sont analysées afin d'identifier les différentes dimensions de l'orientation coopérative, de développer des éléments dans le but d'établir ultérieurement un concept opérationnalisable. Les résultats peuvent être utilisés et testés dans de futures études sur les entreprises coopératives, et ont donc des implications à la fois pour la théorie et la pratique coopératives.

Mots clés: identité coopérative, orientation coopérative, principes coopératifs, valeurs coopératives, valeur des members

Percepción del Valor Cooperativo para el Socio - El Caso de los Bancos Cooperativos Alemanes

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación examina la orientación cooperativa de los bancos cooperativos tal como la perciben sus clientes-socios, es decir, el valor percibido del socio cooperativo, para comprender mejor sus dimensiones e ideas para una posible operacionalización del concepto. Aunque existe una larga tradición de literatura cooperativa y una gran cantidad de trabajos conceptuales y cualitativos sobre las cooperativas, hasta donde el autor sabe, la teoría cooperativa carece de un enfoque claro sobre cómo medir la identidad cooperativa y la orientación de las empresas cooperativas. Este estudio intenta combinar varios métodos, recogiendo primero conceptualmente las diversas dimensiones de la orientación cooperativa de la literatura existente, comparándolas con las declaraciones oficiales, y realizando entrevistas en profundidad con expertos en cooperativas del sector bancario. Los datos se analizan para identificar las distintas dimensiones de la orientación cooperativa, desarrollar ítems con el objetivo de establecer posteriormente un constructo operacionalizable. Los resultados pueden utilizarse y ponerse a prueba en futuros estudios sobre empresas cooperativas, por lo que tienen implicaciones tanto para la teoría como para la práctica cooperativa.

Palabras clave: identidad cooperativa, orientación cooperativa, principios cooperativos, valores cooperativos, valor del socio

1. Introduction

Cooperative enterprises are known as sustainable businesses with the main goal of creating value for their members, by being set up on specific values and principles as defined by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA, 2015). However, from a quantitative perspective, it is difficult to operationalize the elements of cooperative orientation and its potential to positively influence other latent variables, i.e., not directly observable variables, such as member satisfaction or cooperative reputation, in structural path models. As an example, next to traditional and saving banks, cooperative banks have a long tradition in the German banking sector with a strong member and local focus, by being built up on the principles of identity, self-help, autonomy, self-responsibility, and member funding. Based on these principles, a cooperative orientation construct can, for example, be established specifically for this type of bank. The contribution of this study can be summed up as follows: The developed construct can later be integrated into a path model and compared to other types of banks by conducting multigroup analyses (Sarstedt et al., 2011). Furthermore, the construct can be tested in relation to other variables as well as applied to other cooperative sectors.

2. Cooperative orientation from a member perspective

Cooperative organizations, by law, are supposed to generate value from their membership for their members. As opposed to shareholder value in conventional businesses, this is often referred to as "member value" in prior literature. Based on the work of her doctoral dissertation[2], for which this paper was originally one of the pre-studies, The author argues that the member value needs to be a key element among the cooperative principles and that the cooperative identity is important to strengthen this perceived (customer-) member-centric value. In German cooperative law, the term "Förderauftrag" (English: promotion purpose) is not directly mentioned. However, scholars have been working for decades on clearly defining the concept (Ringle, 2010) to come up with an operationalization.

As early as the 1960s, Engelhardt demanded that cooperatives should present their promotion activities in a separate promotion plan (Engelhardt, 1960). In the 1970s, cooperative literature discussed how the cooperative development mandate could be operationalized. Boettcher developed a concept consisting of a development plan and report, which was to be used for cooperative activities more closely to the interests of its members (Boettcher, 1979). In the 1980s, Blomeyer described that the promotion purpose (Förderauftrag) is under change towards stressing the autonomy and distinctiveness of cooperatives (Blomeyer, 1980). In a further development of these ideas, Kramer proposes member quality management. For this purpose, from the author's point of view, it is necessary to involve members by allowing a stronger control of the board by its members. Targeted member surveys could provide relevant findings in this context "also for the determination of the contents of the funding plan" (Kramer, 2005).

Particularly in the last decade, the debate about a meaningful operationalization of Member Value has blossomed anew. To measure member value, it has to be conceptualized, operationalized, surveyed from the perspective of member perception, and verified (Grosskopf et al., 2012).

Within the framework of a structured literature review, it becomes clear that in the past very different approaches and attempts have been formulated to conceptualize and, in some cases, operationalize member value. In 2010, Ringle makes further attempts to define member value more precisely and refers in part to the older literature by Engelhardt (1960) and Boettcher (1979), to specify the promotion mission more precisely. According to the author, cooperatives have primarily the task of placing their members in a better position than would be the case without them being a member of the cooperative (Ringle, 2010).

The current cooperative literature also deals with member value. Especially with regard to the opportunity to raise their profile in a competitive environment, as a particular strength of the cooperative form of enterprise, the member value can be a strategic factor for success (Ringle, 2020b). A member-centered cooperative management must include member support management (Ringle, 2020a). Member promotion should be considered in corporate planning and also evaluated (Grosskopf et al., 2012). Regarding types of cooperatives with a high proportion of non-member customers - as is the case, for example, with cooperative banks - consideration should be given to, what extent "exclusive benefits" and "special conditions" (Grosskopf et al., 2012, 76) could be offered to members in particular without violating the principle of equal treatment and still fulfilling the cooperative purpose. In summary, for almost two decades now, in this context, there has been significant development of knowledge about how member value can be defined and operationalized in concrete terms. While some authors confine themselves to considering member value as an extended share holder value (e.g., Theurl, 2005), other authors conceptually show that a member value must have characteristics specific to the cooperative (e.g., Ringle, 2010) to meet the statutory cooperative responsibility of the 'funding mandate' to the members, which is regulated by German cooperative law. A (perceived) orientation toward the cooperative principles could, in the opinion of the author, serve to create such value for member-customers by being perceived as a fulfillment of the principles from the member-customer perspective. In terms of a member value - or in other words, a perceived cooperative orientation - it is important to operationalize the member value that is close to cooperative principles (Hill and Doluschitz, 2014). This member value mission is the most important principle shaping the identity of all cooperatives, including cooperative banks. Furthermore, the literature review also showed that there is no uniform operationalization of member value yet, although it would be necessary and decisive for a success-oriented management of cooperatives.

Today, cooperative banks are the third pillar in the German retail banking sector next to commercial (e.g., Deutsche Bank) banks and saving banks (e.g., Sparkasse). With almost 18.2 million members in 2021 (BVR, 2021), they are of great importance to the German economy. In contrast to commercial banks and other types of banks with which cooperative banks compete, cooperative banks, like other cooperatives, are governed by certain principles and values. To gain a competitive advantage and attract member-customers in the long term, it can be advantageous for cooperative banks to (re)remember their values and principles. This competitive advantage could be achieved by acting and advertising in a member-oriented manner. Therefore, this study builds the groundwork to derive a uniform, cooperative-specific construct

2 See also Damberg, S. 2022. Strategisches Bankkundenmanagement-eine empirische Reputationsanalyse unter Berücksichtigung genossenschaftlicher Charakteristika (Doctoral dissertation, Technische Universität Hamburg).

for measuring the perceived fulfilment of the cooperative values and principles from a customer-member perspective.

3. Methodology & study design

This study combines various research methods and follows a mixed-methods approach. In step 1, a structured literature review (Snyder, 2019) is conducted in order to gain an overview of the current status of cooperative orientation in the literature. A list of items, categories, and concepts that describe cooperative identity, values and principles are identified and collected. In step 2, expert interviews with experts from the cooperative banking sector are conducted to learn more about their opinions and practical experiences with cooperative values. Moreover, the expert interviews are used to discuss the extracted items from previous studies as well as their specific cooperative values and principles from cooperative practice. In step 3, the developed items are used to establish a scale for a cooperative orientation conceptualization. In the process of item refinement, those items with sufficient loadings are retained. The results of this more explorative research include the groundwork (step 1 and 2) to establish a cooperative orientation construct (step 3). The study's full mixed-method design process is further illustrated in Figure 1.

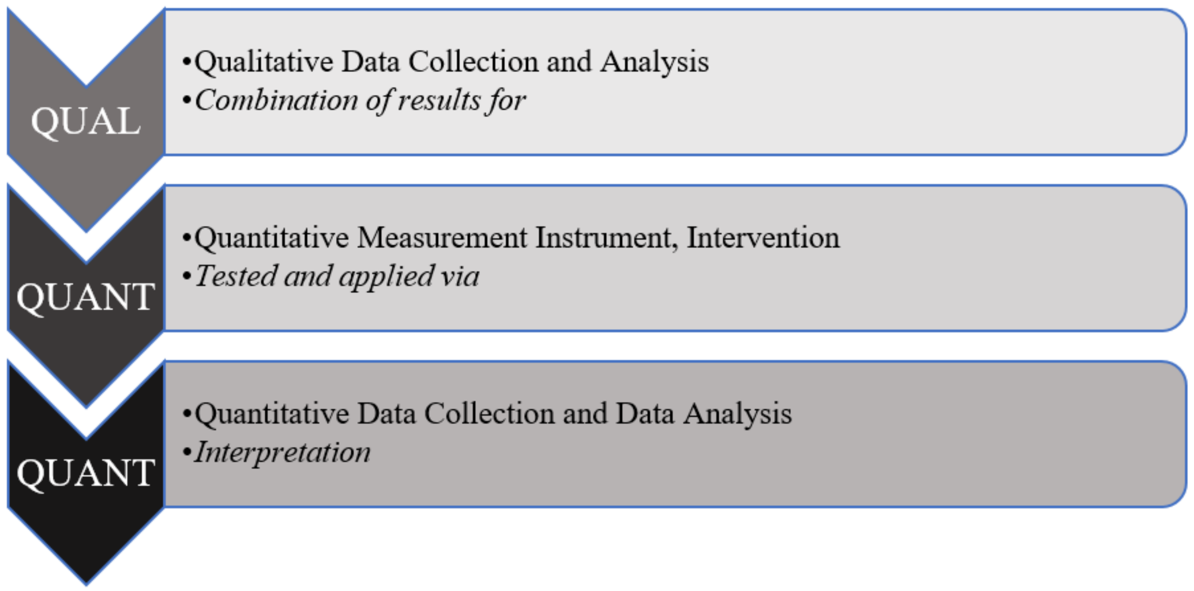

Figure 1. Mixed Methods Design (Source: Own illustration based on Creswell and Clark 2017)

4. Analysis & conceptual results

In this analysis and results section, the preliminary results of the literature search and qualitative pre-study are presented. When researching the overarching principles and values of cooperatives and cooperative banks in particular, we might first want

to take a look at the official principles of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and the European Association of Co-operative Banks (EACB). Both statements are summarized and illustrated in Table 1. The ICA Cooperative Principles are voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education/training and information, cooperation among cooperatives and concern for community[3]. In comparison to these, the key co-op bank values defined by the EACB are governance, resilience, trust, proximity, and social commitment.

Table 1. ICA Cooperative Principles and EACB Key Values

ICA Cooperative Principles	EACB Key Values
Voluntary and open membership	Governance
Democratic member control	Resilience
Member economic participation	Trust
Autonomy and independence	Proximity
Education, training and information	Social Commitment
Cooperation among cooperatives	
Concern for community	

Source: Own illustration (based on EACB 2005; ICA 1995, 2015).

Based on these official values and principles, expert interviews with management from cooperative banks were conducted to learn about the specific characteristics of the German banking sector. The interviewees confirmed that, from their perspective, an overall member focus is not that important in their daily business operations nowadays. They rather treat non-member customers and customer-members very similarly and do not really distinguish. That is an interesting result, as the expectation was clearly that members play a more important role as per the definition of a cooperative member focus. What was deemed important by the experts, however, was the principle of community concern. The experts agreed that they indeed care about the local community, in that they, for example, provide loans to small and medium-sized enterprises in their

3 The ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity also defines Cooperative Values, such as self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity and ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others (ICA, 1995).

region. On a similar note, they feel a social commitment, i.e., responsibility towards their local environment and act accordingly. As an example, they mentioned the sponsoring of local sports clubs and fundraising initiatives for social organizations. One expert revealed that the communication of their initiatives to the public is nowadays taken very seriously, and indeed has to be taken very seriously in such a competitive and diverse market as the German banking market, which consists of three main pillars: Commercial banks, public banks (mostly saving banks), and cooperative banks. Cooperative banks have existed since the beginning of the 19th century and had originally been created to provide the less privileged with access to loans. Nowadays, especially since globalization took over in combination with international competition, loyal customers become scarce in the banking sector. Therefore, adhering to the official principles and values could potentially be one strategy to maintain a customer base or attract new customer-members based on these, and in turn, ensure competitiveness. Considering this as an opportunity, it becomes important what customer-members think. How do they perceive their cooperative bank's "cooperative orientation", i.e., their adherence to principles and values? For this purpose, the next step in the research process is conducted, namely the creation of a list of items that could potentially be suitable for operationalizing cooperative orientation, based on the values and principles described above. The set of items is then mirrored with the cooperative banks' experts to identify those of high and those of less applicability and/or importance. The final set of items can then be tested statistically, and those items with low performance can be excluded from further analyses, whereas the remaining item battery can be further refined in a number of quantitative pre-online surveys sent to customer-members of cooperative banks. The items are typically rated using Likert-scales from e.g. 1=do not agree until 5=do fully agree. After each pre-test round, the items will be statistically tested to become part of an overall cooperative orientation scale that can later be implemented in well-established models, such as the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) by Fornell et al. (1996). This procedure will potentially allow for developing a coop-specific set of items that particularly identifies and measures cooperative characteristics with respect to their principles and values as perceived by their customer-members.

5. Implications

This section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of this paper, with a focus on elements for a marketing strategy for cooperative banks that incorporates the cooperative identity.

5.1 Implications for theory and research

Prior research lacks mixed-methods studies on these topics that can enhance theory and provide empirical evidence on cooperative (bank) reputation and the development of strategies. As early as the 1960s, Engelhardt demanded that cooperatives should present their development of structural path models and thereby generated further quantitative empirical evidence on the relationships between perceived cooperative orientation by customer-members of cooperative banks and other variables, such as relational trust, reputation, satisfaction, and loyalty (see for example Damberg, 2021, 2022a, 2022b; Damberg et al., 2022).

5.2 Implications for practice

Prior research has shown that, across bank types and customer segments, the increasing depersonalization of banking services linked to internationalization

has made effective communication and corresponding customer loyalty measures more difficult (Zinnbauer et al., 2004). A more holistic approach of ensuring and improving corporate reputation is therefore needed that includes elements such as the branches, websites etc. meeting customer preferences (Balmer, 1998). German cooperative banks are already investing in such measures that communicate and might improve the image of cooperative banks. An example is the well-maintained social media, more specifically Instagram channel of the Hamburger Volksbank regarding positive associations of the Volksbank as an employer. Prior research has shown that such initiatives might lead to a better reputation and long-term loyalty. In order to check whether this is actually the case, targeted opinion and satisfaction surveys among existing customers should be conducted. They can be also conducted to take into account the ideas of the members when deciding on, for instance, a new logo or design. Generally, open and transparent communication via reports is a tool for building and enhancing trust among customer-members. Targeted CSR-measures might help to signal trustworthiness to customers (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). In the highly competitive banking market, "simply" offering high-quality products and services will not be sufficient to maintain a competitive advantage. Therefore, developing, implementing, maintaining, and improving measurable marketing elements for a strategy that enhances the cooperative identity will be needed. Cooperative banks in this context have the potential to develop their own brand management that is linked to this identity to stay competitive also from a communications perspective.

Specifically for cooperative banks, stressing the cooperative identity in communication with current and potential customer-members – and potential positive effects on cooperative bank reputation (Damberg, 2022a, 2022b) is an opportunity for competitive advantage. As early as 2006, Münkner and Ringle postulated a membership-oriented strategy with a focus on membership as a core competence (Münkner and Ringle, 2006). A core element of success from the cooperative perspective is the promotion of members (Ringle, 2006) who can thus be tied to the cooperative in the long term. Damberg (2022b) has empirically shown that acting in accordance with principles, as measured by her developed cooperative orientation index, has reputation-enhancing and also loyalty-enhancing effects in the context of German cooperative banks. Furthermore, the analyses revealed that relational trust is an important factor for strategic cooperative bank customer management. Trust-building measures can be used strategically, especially in the cooperative context, to turn customers into members (Ringle, 2007).

A (customer-) member-oriented management can be driven by the communication of the cooperative identity, i.e., their principles and values. This should entail a trust-building relationship management that has been proven to increase loyalty among cooperative banks' customer-members (Damberg et al., 2022).

Figure 2 illustrates a summary of the presented strategic marketing elements based on the cooperative identity that were developed in this section. To ensure the continued existence of cooperative banks, from the point of view of the members as owners, cooperative banking in which many branches continue to provide sustainable, customer-focused banking complementary to market solutions and digital offerings is needed (Blisse, 2017). Additionally, the necessary structural conditions must be created to enable cooperative banks, as an economically stable pillar of the German banking sector (Blome-Drees, 2012), to continue to have the necessary room for maneuver in the

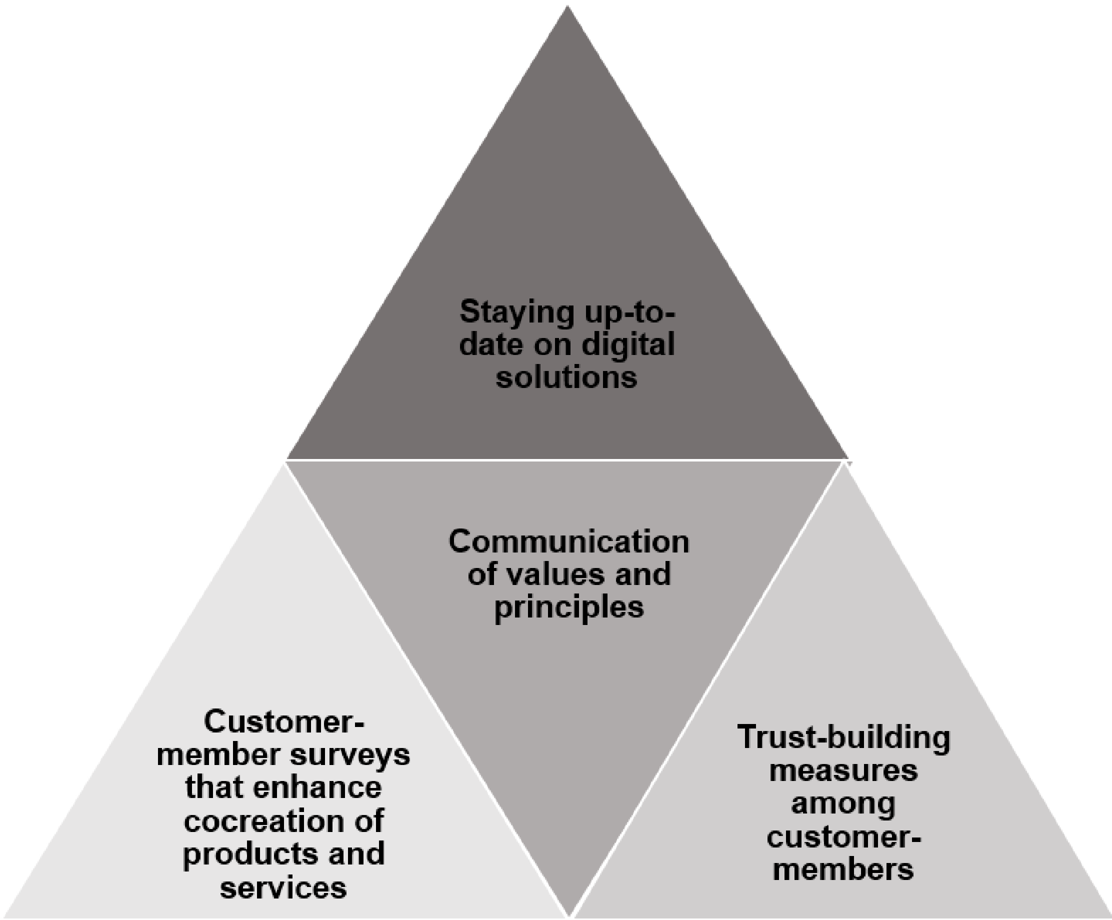

Figure 2. Strategic marketing elements based on the cooperative identity (Source: Own illustration.)

highly competitive environment in the future.

6. Conclusion & future research

This contribution was initially submitted to the ICA 33rd World Cooperative Congress and is based on a mixed-methods methodology used to develop a conceptualization of cooperative orientation in the German cooperative banking context. There is a strong need for further research to gain a better understanding of the meaning of cooperative orientation for cooperatives as well as for a successful member management. Therefore, this study is a step towards addressing this research gap.

Although this mixed-method study uses a more holistic approach, including a structured literature search and in-depth interviews to build a cooperative orientation construct, there remain limitations. The fact that this pre-study is based on secondary sources and qualitative data from the cooperative banking sector in Germany is one limitation of this study. For example, some relevant items might not be caught through this approach. It is often argued that cooperative sectors

are heterogenous, and the same might be applicable to the understanding of cooperative identity. Therefore, interviews must be conducted across sectors and the developed construct should be tested in various cooperative contexts, countries, and cultural contexts in the future to ensure generalizability. Altogether, this study has implications for both cooperative theory development as well as cooperative practice across sectors. Future research might have a look at more specific or additional items for various types of cooperatives as well as at different cultural settings to further develop and validate the conceptualization.

Acknowledgements & further remarks

This contribution is based on preliminary results of Dr. Svenja Damberg's doctoral dissertation that was initially submitted to the Hamburg University of Technology in November 2021.

Damberg, Svenja. 2022. *Strategisches Bankkundenmanagement – eine empirische Reputationsanalyse unter Berücksichtigung genossenschaftlicher Charakteristika.* Doctoral dissertation, Technische Universität Hamburg.

The author has published further results related to the marketing of cooperative banks in the following three research articles that are linked to the topic of this more practically oriented contribution.

Damberg, Svenja. 2022. "Does Creating Perceived Co-operative Member Value Pay Off? An Empirical Study in the German Co-operative Banking Context." *Journal of Co-operative Organization and Management,* 10, no. 1: 100170.

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Más Valor Cooperativo: Iniciativas de Mejora Continua en el Ecosistema Cooperativo Uruguayo

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More Co-operative Value: Continuous Improvement Initiatives in the Uruguayan Co-operative Ecosystem

Abstract

In recent decades, Uruguay has focused on the development and consolidation of cooperative enterprises by improving productivity, as well as by making cooperatives more visible as key players in the country's economic activity and their contribution to society.

Given that the productivity of enterprises depends, to a large extent, on factors linked to their management, public policy proposed the design of a management model for cooperatives to raise awareness and integrate high-performance management practices, detect opportunities to increase productivity based on the concept of total quality, incorporate indicators for measurement and improvement, and promote their dissemination through the visibility and recognition of their good practices.

As a result, three tools were designed that act in a complementary manner: 1) a management improvement model called More Cooperative Value; 2) a tool that guides cooperatives to implement improvements, called the Improvement and Learning Informatics Tool (HIMA), which is applied together with an accompanying programme (Management Improvement Programme); and 3) a system for recognising the quality of cooperative management, the More Cooperative Value Award.

This article describes each of the tools developed and their contribution to the cooperative system.

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Plus de valeur coopérative : initiatives d'amélioration continue dans l'écosystème coopératif uruguayen

Résumé

Au cours des dernières décennies, l'Uruguay s'est concentré sur le développement et la consolidation des entreprises coopératives en améliorant la productivité, ainsi qu'en rendant les coopératives plus visibles en tant qu'acteurs clés de l'activité économique du pays et de leur contribution à la société.

Étant donné que la productivité des entreprises dépend, dans une large mesure, de facteurs liés à leur gestion, la politique publique a proposé la conception d'un modèle de gestion pour les coopératives afin de sensibiliser et d'intégrer des pratiques de gestion performantes, de détecter les possibilités d'accroître la productivité sur la base du concept de qualité totale, d'incorporer des indicateurs de mesure et d'amélioration et de promouvoir leur diffusion grâce à la visibilité et à la reconnaissance de leurs bonnes pratiques.

Trois outils complémentaires ont ainsi été conçus : 1) un modèle d'amélioration de la gestion appelé More Cooperative Value ; 2) un outil qui guide les coopératives dans la mise en œuvre des améliorations, appelé Improvement and Learning Informatics Tool (HIMA), qui est appliqué avec un programme d'accompagnement (Management Improvement Programme) ; et 3) un système de reconnaissance de la qualité de la gestion des coopératives, le More Cooperative Value Award.

Cet article décrit chacun des outils développés et leur contribution au système coopératif.

Más Valor Cooperativo: Iniciativas de Mejora Continua en el Ecosistema Cooperativo Uruguayo

Resumen

En las últimas décadas, Uruguay apostó al desarrollo y la consolidación de las empresas cooperativas a partir de la mejora de la productividad, así como también mediante la visibilización de las cooperativas como actores trascendentales en la actividad económica del país y su contribución a la sociedad.

Dado que la productividad de las empresas depende, en buena medida, de factores vinculados a su gestión, desde la política pública se propuso diseñar un modelo de gestión para que las cooperativas tomen conciencia e integren prácticas de gestión de alto desempeño, detecten oportunidades para aumentar la productividad desde el concepto de calidad total, incorporen indicadores para la medición y la mejora e impulsen su diseminación mediante la visibilidad y el reconocimiento de sus buenas prácticas.

Como resultado, se diseñaron tres herramientas que actúan de forma complementaria: 1) un modelo de mejora de gestión denominado Más Valor Cooperativo; 2) una herramienta que guía a las cooperativas a implementar mejoras, denominada Herramienta Informática de Mejora y Aprendizaje (HIMA), que se aplica junto a un programa de acompañamiento (Programa de Mejora de Gestión); y 3) un sistema de reconocimiento a la calidad de la gestión de las cooperativas, el Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo.

El presente artículo describe cada una de las herramientas desarrolladas y su contribución al sistema cooperativo.

1. Introducción

En Uruguay, las cooperativas aparecieron junto a otras organizaciones de cooperación y de organización de los trabajadores, vinculadas en forma muy estrecha a la inmigración europea (proveniente de Italia y España, principalmente) en el siglo XIX.

Los orígenes del movimiento cooperativo en el ámbito nacional se vinculan a la concentración de importantes grupos de trabajadores, lo que seguramente se relacione también con las formaciones sindicales (de trabajadores del ferrocarril, frigoríficos, gráficos, textiles) y las sociedades de socorro mutuo, como las mutualistas médicas, que a fines del siglo XIX prestaron los primeros servicios mediante la cooperación. Durante esta primera etapa, las experiencias cooperativas sentaron un precedente como nueva modalidad, precedente lo suficientemente impactante como para permitir su evolución posterior.

Lo que hoy conocemos estrictamente como cooperativas surgió con mayor firmeza en 1920, con el liderazgo de las cooperativas de trabajo y de consumo.

Durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, hubo varios intentos legislativos e institucionales (que no llegaron a plasmarse en hechos) que buscaron dar un marco jurídico más amplio al movimiento cooperativo. Luego se fueron definiendo formal y jurídicamente las diferentes modalidades cooperativas que existen en el país:

- En 1941, las cooperativas agropecuarias (categoría que incluye a las agroindustriales).
- En 1946, las cooperativas de consumo.
- En 1966, las cooperativas de producción (trabajo).
- En 1968, las cooperativas de vivienda.
- En 1971, las cooperativas de ahorro y crédito.
- En 2006, las cooperativas sociales.

En el año 1988 se constituyó la Confederación Uruguaya de Entidades Cooperativas (CUDECOOP), máxima entidad de representación del movimiento cooperativo uruguayo. A través de sus entidades miembro, representa a más de 3.500 cooperativas de base de todos los sectores con actividad en el país, las que involucran a más un millón de cooperativistas.

En la actualidad se mantienen las mencionadas modalidades y se integra, con la Ley 18.407, el concepto de clases cooperativas. La clasificación de las cooperativas se determina por su objeto y fundamentalmente son cooperativas de trabajadores, de consumidores (consumidores) o de trabajadores y consumidores a la vez (Uruguay, Poder Legislativo, 2008, art. 10).

Las cooperativas de trabajadores están organizadas en función del trabajo como factor esencial. Se constituyen y funcionan para asegurar a sus socios o propietarios un empleo estable y permanente, y, mediante este, una remuneración digna. Pueden tener carácter industrial, de prestación de servicios, de producción agrícola o agroindustrial, artesanal o artístico, y esta categoría incluye también a las cooperativas sociales.

Esta clase de cooperativa tiene tres características fundamentales:

- El trabajo es el principal objeto de la asociación voluntaria de personas que la integran.
- Los niveles jerárquicos derivados de la estructura organizativa —necesaria para coordinar el trabajo asociado— deben determinarse de forma que no vulneren el principio de control democrático.

- La remuneración del trabajo debe ser proporcional al resultado económico obtenido.

Las cooperativas de consumidores o usuarios tiene como objeto principal la adquisición de bienes o servicios para ponerlos a disposición de sus socios o propietarios en condiciones más favorables que las comunes del mercado en términos de precio, calidad, oportunidad o financiación. En esta categoría se sitúan las cooperativas de consumo, de vivienda, ahorro y crédito, seguros y garantía recíproca, es decir, aquellas que prestan a sus asociados servicios tales como transporte, salud, educación o servicios públicos (comunicaciones, electricidad, agua potable, limpieza, vialidad).

Las características primordiales de este tipo de cooperativas son:

- El objeto fundamental es brindar bienes y servicios a sus asociados sin ánimo lucrativo.

- Las transacciones con terceros no socios —cuando son admitidas— no tienen carácter cooperativo sino de comercio.

- La distribución de excedentes económicos —cuando la hay— se hace en proporción al uso de los servicios que cada socio haya brindado en el ejercicio correspondiente y no en retribución al capital que cada uno haya integrado.

En 2008, se consagró la Ley General de Cooperativas, Ley 18.407 (Uruguay, Poder Legislativo, 2008), que era reclamada desde hacía más de veinte años por el movimiento cooperativo. Esta ley, además de dotar a la legislación cooperativa de una estructura articulada y coherente, estableció la creación del Instituto Nacional del Cooperativismo (INACOOP), en el que participan de forma conjunta el gobierno y representantes del movimiento cooperativo.

El INACOOP es el organismo encargado de proponer, asesorar y ejecutar la política nacional de cooperativismo. Tiene como objetivo promover el desarrollo económico, social y cultural del sector cooperativo y su inserción en el desarrollo del país.

En la actualidad, Uruguay registra 3.740 cooperativas de las distintas clases. Del total de las cooperativas registradas, un tercio presenta personas registradas. Las cooperativas que generan más empleo son las de trabajo, (9.270 personas empleadas en 453 cooperativas). Les siguen las cooperativas sociales (3.895) y las agrarias (3.822) (Astiazarán y Castiglia, 2022).

Se estima que hoy casi un millón de uruguayos están vinculados a, por lo menos, un tipo de cooperativa, cifra que representa un tercio de la población uruguaya. El cooperativismo es en el país una herramienta de inclusión social y económica que crece de forma permanente.

De acuerdo con su definición internacional, las cooperativas se caracterizan por ser empresas asociativas y su identidad se consolida a partir de la buena articulación de los elementos con carácter empresarial y los de carácter asociativo. La identidad cooperativa, básicamente definida por sus valores y principios, debe buscar un equilibrio saludable y orgánico con el desarrollo de elementos de carácter empresarial. En otras palabras, la sostenibilidad de las empresas cooperativas en un mercado con altos niveles de dinamismo y desarrollo de tecnologías disruptivas requiere de la adecuada complementariedad de acciones que fortalezcan la viabilidad económica y una gestión sólida promotora de sus principios y valores.

El desafío principal para las cooperativas, entonces, radica en constituirse como alternativas competitivas en el mercado, adaptables a sus exigencias innovadoras, pero conscientes de su compromiso

conceptual, filosófico e identitario como organizaciones de transformación social generadoras de valor y valores.

Las empresas cooperativas deben tomar el cambio como algo saludable y la innovación como forma de generar valor, entendiendo el valor como concepto amplio: más valor económico, social y ambiental.

Para cumplir con estas premisas, es necesario analizar el modelo cooperativo de gestión y brindarle a todo el movimiento un marco, a partir de un programa y una herramienta de gestión que permita la mejora de la gestión de la calidad y la innovación.

2. Una a una, las herramientas diseñadas

2.1 Modelo Más Valor Cooperativo

En el desarrollo del modelo cooperativo de mejora de gestión Más Valor Cooperativo (INACOOP, 2021a) intervinieron de forma conjunta tres organizaciones: el INACOOP, el Laboratorio Tecnológico del Uruguay (LATU) y el Instituto Nacional de Calidad (INACAL). Asimismo, se contó con el apoyo y aporte de CUDECOOP.

El LATU y el INACAL son instituciones reconocidas por impulsar el desarrollo sostenible del Uruguay mediante el diseño y la implementación de soluciones integrales enfocadas en la competitividad y la sustentabilidad de las organizaciones empresariales y públicas nacionales y el desarrollo de acciones para promover, difundir e implementar la cultura de la calidad, la innovación y la mejora continua.

El modelo Más Valor Cooperativo se diseñó como herramienta fundamental para la construcción de más valor social y económico para los socios y la comunidad, poniendo a disposición un recurso que toda empresa cooperativa puede integrar y transmitir, a partir del fortalecimiento de su propia identidad y particularidades, el desarrollo de capacidades y habilidades de gestión y el continuo desafío de mejora de la calidad y la innovación.

El modelo desarrolla en forma específica el concepto de calidad para las distintas modalidades cooperativas, tanto de trabajadores como de usuarios. Contempla, además, los procesos internos de toma de decisiones de las cooperativas, su organización colectiva y la cultura de cada organización.

Se estructura en 6 criterios, vinculados al “liderazgo cooperativo”, la “estrategia cooperativa”, el “desarrollo humano”, los “procesos”, la “sostenibilidad” y los “resultados” de la empresa a partir de la medición, la evaluación y el análisis, y 34 subcriterios, que se detallan a continuación.

2.1.1 Criterio 1: liderazgo cooperativo

El liderazgo en las empresas cooperativas se basa en la promoción de la participación a través de equipos de trabajo que construyen redes interactivas que forman un entramado de relaciones interpersonales, sustentadas en compromisos de solidaridad, con el fin de asegurar el cumplimiento de la misión y la viabilidad de cada empresa. En el modelo de gestión propuesto se identifican cinco dimensiones que deberían mostrar fuerte consistencia entre sí en las cooperativas: la forma de pensar, la forma de decidir, la forma de ejecutar, la calidad con la que se ejecuta y el aprendizaje a partir de los resultados obtenidos.

El criterio de liderazgo se divide, entonces, en cinco subcriterios: 1) liderazgo cooperativo, en el que se desarrolla la forma de “pensar” de la cooperativa: expresa los valores, los principios y los conceptos principales que guían a la organización; 2) liderazgo en la gestión cooperativa, donde se analiza el aporte del sistema de gestión a la forma de decidir; 3) liderazgo en la asignación de recursos para la forma de ejecutar; 4) liderazgo para la calidad, el desarrollo y la innovación, en el que se contemplan los productos, los servicios y la cultura de la organización; y 5) liderazgo para el aprendizaje y la mejora continua a partir del análisis de los resultados como importante fuente de conocimiento a partir del cual se desarrolla la mejora continua.

La forma en la que se instrumenta el liderazgo por parte de una cooperativa debe estar en concordancia con el cumplimiento de los principios cooperativos que la rigen.

Tabla 1. Criterio de liderazgo, subcriterios y principios cooperativos asociados

CRITERIO	SUBCRITERIO	PRINCIPIOS ASOCIADOS
LIDERAZGO	Liderazgo cooperativo	1. Membresía abierta y voluntaria 2. Control democrático de los socios 3. Participación económica 5. Educación, formación e información
	Liderazgo en la gestión cooperativa	
	Liderazgo en la asignación de recursos	
	Liderazgo para la calidad, el desarrollo y la innovación	
	Liderazgo para el aprendizaje y la mejora continua	

2.1.2 Criterio 2: estrategia cooperativa

El criterio de estrategia busca analizar cómo la cooperativa define, desarrolla y evalúa la efectividad de su estrategia logrando la adaptación de los recursos y habilidades al entorno cambiante, aprovechando sus oportunidades y evaluando los riesgos en función de objetivos y metas. Se plantean herramientas para analizar cómo la empresa cooperativa ha definido, desarrolla y mantiene sus ventajas competitivas, incluidas las ventajas cooperativas propias. Este criterio se divide en tres subcriterios.

Tabla 2. Criterio de estrategia, subcriterios y principios cooperativos asociados

CRITERIO	SUBCRITERIO	PRINCIPIOS ASOCIADOS
ESTRATEGIA	Política de la empresa cooperativa	3. Participación económica 4. Autonomía e independencia 5. Educación, formación e información 7. Compromiso con la comunidad
	Planificación estratégica	
	Planificación operativa	

2.1.3 Criterio 3: desarrollo humano

El desarrollo humano es vital para el crecimiento de la empresa cooperativa. Se busca que la cooperativa conozca, en forma cierta, cuáles son las expectativas de cada socio, así como las capacidades, habilidades, conocimientos y limitaciones de sus integrantes. El subcriterio empoderamiento cooperativo está asociado a dar autoridad y posibilidad de conducir y liderar a los socios, desarrollando su confianza y capacidad de hacer. Para ello es necesario el aprendizaje, el crecimiento individual y colectivo a partir del cual las cooperativas brindan entrenamiento y formación a sus miembros, dirigentes electos y personal, para la construcción y el fortalecimiento de sus capacidades y la mejora de sus habilidades, con el fin de contribuir de forma efectiva al desarrollo de la cooperativa sustentado en el esfuerzo colectivo.

El subcriterio de inclusión y diversidad tiene como fin asegurar que la situación de discapacidad, la condición sexual y otros aspectos no sean causa de no inclusión como socios o de no asignación de responsabilidades dentro de la cooperativa, promoviendo políticas de diversidad y prácticas inclusivas. Por último, el subcriterio vinculado a la calidad de vida refiere a cómo la cooperativa brinda un desarrollo integral a sus integrantes, ofreciendo posibilidades de superación económica, social, profesional, cultural y comunitaria.

Tabla 3. Criterio de desarrollo humano, subcriterios y principios cooperativos asociados

CRITERIO	SUBCRITERIO	PRINCIPIOS ASOCIADOS
DESARROLLO HUMANO	Empoderamiento cooperativo	1. Membresía abierta y voluntaria 2. Control democrático de los socios 3. Participación económica 5. Educación, formación e información
	Aprendizaje, crecimiento individual y colectivo	
	Inclusión y diversidad	
	Calidad de vida	

2.1.4 Criterio 4: procesos

El criterio de procesos tiene como fin el desarrollo de una gestión por procesos por parte de la cooperativa. Esto implica definir cómo la cooperativa gestiona sus procesos, alineados con la estrategia definida, en acuerdo con los principios del cooperativismo y con el fin de satisfacer las necesidades y expectativas de sus clientes externos actuales y futuros, y otros grupos de interés. Busca que la cooperativa defina actividades, pasos y sistemas, así como secuencias interrelacionadas, para lograr resultados definidos.

Se divide en doce subcriterios, tal como lo indica la Tabla 4.

Tabla 4. Criterio de procesos, subcriterios y principios cooperativos asociados

CRITERIO	SUBCRITERIO	PRINCIPIOS ASOCIADOS
PROCESOS	Visión por procesos	1. Membresía abierta y voluntaria 2. Control democrático de los socios 3. Participación económica 4. Autonomía e independencia 5. Educación, formación e información 6. Cooperación entre cooperativas 7. Compromiso con la comunidad
	Medición, análisis y mejora de los procesos	
	Procesos empresariales de la cooperativa (9 subcriterios)	
	Intercooperación	

2.1.5 Criterio 5: sostenibilidad

El criterio de sostenibilidad cooperativa desarrolla el concepto de sostenibilidad desde un enfoque de negocios. La sostenibilidad económica, social y medioambiental debe ser una de las principales motivaciones y fundamento de las cooperativas. Pero, a su vez, la empresa cooperativa debe establecer procesos de vigilancia estratégica e inteligencia, de forma de evaluar en profundidad cómo el conocimiento proactivo del entorno ayuda en la toma de decisiones y en el proceso de planificación estratégica.

Este criterio se divide en cuatro subcriterios, como lo muestra la Tabla 5.

Tabla 5. Criterio de sotenibilidad, subcriterios y principios cooperativos asociados

CRITERIO	SUBCRITERIO	PRINCIPIOS ASOCIADOS
SOSTENIBILIDAD	Gestión social	2. Control democrático de los socios 4. Autonomía e independencia 5. Educación, formación e información 6. Cooperación entre cooperativas 7. Compromiso con la comunidad
	Gestión ambiental	
	Percepción de la comunidad y de la sociedad	
	Vigilancia comercial, tecnológica, competitiva y del entorno	

2.1.6 Criterio 6: resultados

Por último, el criterio de resultados refiere a cómo la empresa cooperativa realiza el seguimiento de su gestión, según lo establecido en los criterios anteriores, identificando de manera sistemática la forma de medición y los cambios requeridos para el logro de sus resultados. Este seguimiento permite analizar el avance y proponer acciones a tomar para lograr los objetivos e identificar los factores de éxito o fracaso real o potencial de forma de introducir ajustes durante la ejecución. Se realiza la medición de los parámetros clave, definidos a través de indicadores propuestos por la empresa cooperativa, evidenciando mejoras tangibles en su competitividad.

Tabla 6. Criterio de resultados, subcriterios y principios cooperativos asociados

CRITERIO	SUBCRITERIO	PRINCIPIOS ASOCIADOS
RESULTADOS	Liderazgo	1. Membresía abierta y voluntaria 2. Control democrático de los socios 3. Participación económica 4. Autonomía e independencia 5. Educación, formación e información 6. Cooperación entre cooperativas 7. Compromiso con la comunidad
	Estrategia	
	Desarrollo humano	
	Procesos	
	Sostenibilidad	
	Resultados globales	

2.2 La HIMA y el Programa de Mejora de Gestión

Como instrumento complementario al modelo Más Valor Cooperativo, se desarrolló la Herramienta Informática de Mejora y Aprendizaje (HIMA), con el fin de guiar a las cooperativas en la incorporación de nuevas prácticas profesionales definidas en el modelo, apuntando a la mejora de la gestión, la competitividad y la sostenibilidad de las cooperativas. Para el desarrollo de la HIMA se contó con el cofinanciamiento de la Agencia Nacional de Desarrollo (ANDE).

La HIMA está integrada al sistema informático de gestión que vincula a las cooperativas con el INACOOP, denominado Cooperbit. Su uso es libre y gratuito para todas las cooperativas del país que estén inscriptas ante el Instituto y quieran conocer sus propias prácticas de gestión, aprender y mejorarlas, potenciando cambios año a año.

La HIMA se estructura en capítulos y subcapítulos coincidentes con los criterios y subcriterios del modelo Más Valor Cooperativo y mantiene la misma definición para los conceptos que involucra. Pero, a su vez, incorpora un capítulo destinado a la medición del desempeño de la cooperativa a partir de un conjunto de indicadores de gestión predefinidos, creados específicamente para la gestión cooperativa. Estos indicadores se organizan en perspectivas y principios, dando como resultado una "foto" de la cooperativa en su gestión como empresa y en los principios rectores. En la Tabla 7 se detallan las perspectivas (ejes de gestión) en las que se organizan estos indicadores.

Tabla 7. Perspectivas e indicadores HIMA

Perspectivas
Socios, usuarios, clientes
Gobierno cooperativo
Financiera
Procesos internos
Aprendizaje y crecimiento
Relación con el entorno y responsabilidad social

En forma paralela, para que las cooperativas puedan implementar el proceso de mejora y utilizar la HIMA, se diseñó un programa específico de acompañamiento, el Programa de Mejora de Gestión. Su propósito es conducir a las cooperativas, mediante un facilitador, en la introducción de procesos de cambio vinculados a la calidad y la innovación con el fin de mejorar su posicionamiento, competitividad y sostenibilidad.

El Programa de Mejora de Gestión (INACOOP, 2021b) tiene una duración de nueve meses, durante los cuales las cooperativas cuentan con asistencia técnica para la implementación de mejoras con base en la guía de prácticas que propone la HIMA.

El Programa de Mejora de Gestión permite que las cooperativas implementen e integren la HIMA a su propia gestión, profesionalicen sus prácticas, incorporen habilidades y establezcan procesos de planificación y mejora continua.

2.3 Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo

La contribución del modelo Más Valor Cooperativo y la HIMA a la profesionalización y la modernización de la gestión de las cooperativas requiere de un mecanismo que evalúe y motive a las empresas a implementar de forma continua procesos de mejora, así como a darles visibilidad.

Por tal motivo, se diseñó un proceso de reconocimiento a la gestión cooperativa, el Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo (INACAL, 2021), brindado por el INACAL y el INACOOP. Tiene como fin reconocer los avances en la implementación de prácticas cooperativas basadas en el modelo Más Valor Cooperativo y a partir de la aplicación de la HIMA, así como facilitar a las cooperativas la puesta en marcha de un compromiso con la mejora continua.

El Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo favorece la visibilización de las cooperativas como parte del sistema empresarial uruguayo, en pie de igualdad con otras formas organizativas empresariales, destacando su especial naturaleza y su identidad sustentada en los valores y principios cooperativos frente a otros actores.

De forma anual, las cooperativas voluntariamente se presentan al reconocimiento y su gestión es evaluada por un conjunto de evaluadores competentes, seleccionados por la

Comisión de Selección de Evaluadores de los premios y reconocimientos otorgados por el INACAL. A cada cooperativa se le asigna un equipo de evaluadores, que elaboran los informes de evaluación una vez efectuados los análisis oportunos y los informes técnicos destinados a las cooperativas participantes, además de realizar la visita a las cooperativas seleccionadas por el Consejo de Jueces.

Al Consejo de Jueces le compete seleccionar las cooperativas que serán visitadas por los equipos evaluadores en función del grado de desarrollo identificado en las prácticas de gestión y efectuar la selección de aquellas cooperativas merecedoras de reconocimiento desde el punto de vista técnico.

El Consejo de Premiación es responsable de emitir el fallo acerca de las cooperativas que recibirán reconocimientos, pudiendo rechazar la premiación de aquellas que, a su juicio, no son merecedoras de estos, por motivos debidamente fundados que no tengan relación con el proceso técnico de evaluación.

El modelo Más Valor Cooperativo habilita el reconocimiento a las cooperativas en seis niveles, a saber: Germinal, Compromiso, Implementación, Mejora, Sustentabilidad y Excelencia.

3. Resultados

Durante 2020, cuatro cooperativas participaron en el Programa de Mejora de Gestión, integrando e implementando mejoras en sus prácticas y procesos a partir de la HIMA. Estas cooperativas contaron con el acompañamiento de un facilitador capacitado en el modelo Más Valor Cooperativo y en la HIMA, quien los guio, asistió y apoyó en el proceso de implementación e incorporación de las mejoras.

A partir del proceso de implementación, las cooperativas cuentan con un manual de gestión que integra sus actividades empresariales y sociales, en un equilibrio articulado entre ambas, y tendiente a lograr el eficiente y eficaz manejo y organización. Cuentan, a su vez, con un sistema de indicadores que permite visualizar su desempeño como empresas y como cooperativas, agrupándose en dimensiones vinculadas a perspectivas empresariales y principios cooperativos. Finalmente, disponen de un sistema de documentación de prácticas y un reservorio digital y unificado de documentos de su gestión.

Con un enfoque cuantitativo, con posterioridad a las implementaciones, se realizó una encuesta con el fin de medir el impacto de la implementación y se obtuvieron los siguientes resultados: las cuatro cooperativas declararon percibir un aumento de autoconfianza. Asimismo, todas las cooperativas que implementaron mejoras expresaron que el impacto fue positivo y que perciben que tendrán un mejor aprovechamiento de los subsidios otorgados gracias a una gestión más ordenada y planificada. En cuanto a las habilidades de gestión desarrolladas, las cooperativas indicaron haberlas mejorado bastante, así como haber aumentado el conocimiento relativo a calidad e innovación. El 75% declaró que el nivel de profesionalización de la gestión en su cooperativa aumentó (INACOOP, 2021c). De este modo, es posible afirmar que las cooperativas participantes en el programa lograron implementar mejoras en su gestión basadas en la calidad y la innovación de las prácticas, manteniendo y asegurando el cumplimiento de los valores cooperativos.

Luego de cumplir con su participación en el Programa de Mejora de Gestión, las cuatro cooperativas se postularon voluntariamente al Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo para ser evaluadas. Presentaron su reporte extenso, un documento que emite la HIMA a partir de la descripción que realizan las cooperativas de sus prácticas, incluyendo las mejoras implementadas durante el proceso. El Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo fue entregado en noviembre de 2021. Hoy, las cuatro cooperativas siguen en el proceso de implementación de mejoras y recorriendo un camino de mejora continua, y se presentaron a la edición 2022 del Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo.

4. Impacto como política pública

Para evaluar el impacto del modelo Más Valor Cooperativo, la HIMA y el Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo como política pública, se definieron los siguientes indicadores específicos, a ser medidos de forma anual y evaluados luego de tres años de ejecución:

- Interés por la HIMA, medido a partir del porcentaje de cooperativas por rubro que manifiestan interés en implementar la herramienta.

- Capacitación, medido a partir del porcentaje de cooperativas que participaron de talleres, capacitaciones y sensibilizaciones en los contenidos de la HIMA.

- Reconocimiento público, medido a partir del porcentaje de cooperativas que se presentan al Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo.

En cuanto al interés por la HIMA, el porcentaje aún no es significativo, pues la herramienta lleva tan solo dos años de funcionamiento y se trata de dos años de pandemia, en los que las cooperativas vieron relegados sus intereses de mejorar la gestión para enfrentar la crisis. El interés por la HIMA en números absolutos ha sido de 35 cooperativas en esos dos años. En lo que refiere a capacitación, las cooperativas que participaron de charlas, capacitaciones y sensibilizaciones relativas a la mejora de gestión fueron cien. Finalmente, a la primera edición del Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo se presentaron seis cooperativas, mientras que a la segunda edición se presentaron diez.

5. Conclusiones

A partir de un modelo de gestión específico es posible mejorar la competitividad y la sostenibilidad de las empresas cooperativas manteniendo, promoviendo, estimulando y fortaleciendo su identidad.

Asimismo, la identidad cooperativa se resuelve no solo en el diseño de un modelo específico y herramientas de acompañamiento, sino también en el fortalecimiento y el desarrollo regional, superando los límites nacionales. La identidad cooperativa trasciende las políticas públicas de cada país, el diseño de una metodología acorde a la naturaleza cooperativa puede ser transmitido y ajustado a otros países del continente, de forma que impulse y propague la identidad cooperativa latinoamericana.

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Anexo

Anexo I. Mejoras cualitativas definidas por las cooperativas participantes

A partir de entrevistas a las cooperativas participantes, se presentan a continuación las mejoras cualitativas definidas por ellas.

Cooperativa de consumo Coperpay: "[El Programa de Mejora de Gestión e implementar la HIMA] nos orientó hacia un proceso de mejora en áreas que son claves para el accionar de la cooperativa y para aplicar un proceso de transformación. Marcó una guía de trabajo, reafirmando nuestra forma participativa en la toma de decisiones. Nos deja como enseñanza que todo proceso de mejora implica: capacitación, trabajo en equipo, compromiso, pensar estrategias, planificar, ejecutar y evaluar los resultados, tomando las medidas necesarias cuando corresponda".

Cooperativa de trabajo Reddentis: "[El Programa de Mejora de Gestión e implementar la HIMA] nos motivó a tener una mirada sistémica la gestión operativa. La principal herramienta que nos deja es incorporar a nuestra gestión la visión de procesos y la herramienta HIMA; el empoderamiento de funcionarios, la definición colectiva de indicadores y mapa de procesos".

La cooperativa de trabajo Reddentis obtuvo el Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo Nivel Implementación.

Cooperativa de consumo COSAP: "[El Programa de Mejora de Gestión e implementar la HIMA] permitió identificar las mejoras a ser incorporadas al sistema de gestión de la cooperativa, en particular con relación a su mapa de procesos y a los espacios de participación de los socios en los procesos de gestión de la cooperativa. La principal herramienta que nos deja es la actualización del mapa de procesos, avances en la reformulación de los procesos principales a partir del uso de planes de calidad, readecuación del organigrama, determinación de los componentes del proyecto de código de ética, y, en particular, determinación de los espacios de participación de los socios en la propia instancia de diseño de los procesos principales de la cooperativa (tema que surge como consecuencia de la encuesta organizada durante la consultoría), a partir de la reformulación de las herramientas vinculadas al proceso de marketing, entre otros aspectos".

La cooperativa de consumo COSAP obtuvo el Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo Nivel Implementación.

Cooperativa de trabajadores Molino Santa Rosa: "Durante el transcurso del proyecto se trabajó en la gestión de procesos de la cooperativa, identificando y trabajando sobre numerosos aspectos de mejora tanto en la eficiencia productiva, organizacional, estratégica, etc. La visión por procesos y el hecho de identificar en cada proceso aspectos a trabajar y gestionar priorizando aspectos claves para la cooperativa".

La cooperativa de trabajo Molino Santa Rosa obtuvo el Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo Nivel Compromiso.

Anexo II. Imágenes

Imagen 1. Cooperativa COSAP, implementación del Programa de Mejora de Gestión, 2020

Imagen 2. Cooperativa Reddentis, implementación del Programa de Mejora de Gestión, 2020

Imagen 3. Cooperativa COOPACE, entrega del Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo Nivel Sustentabilidad, 2021

Imagen 4. Cooperativa Molino Santa Rosa, entrega del Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo Nivel Compromiso, 2021

Imagen 5. Autoridades del INACOOP y representantes de cooperativas en la entrega del Reconocimiento Más Valor Cooperativo, INACAL, 2021

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