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A framework for social utility to achieve strategic governance: The case of the Moroccan cooperative

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Abstract

This research began with an examination of the challenges facing the Moroccan cooperative sector and culminated in the development of a model for Moroccan cooperatives, focusing on the formulation of a framework to achieve strategic governance of cooperatives and to propose a simple, unified framework for analysis and reflection to define and address cooperative issues. Thus, this framework has helped to inform the thinking of cooperative members keen to commit their organisations to a process of continuous improvement.

Keywords: Cooperative – Framework – Governance – Social utility – Morocco.

Introduction

Drawing on often highly detailed empirical studies, numerous works have sought to identify the cultural characteristics of societies or organisations in order to pinpoint elements of universal significance. This is the Etic approach. Here, we are led to another important epistemological distinction. Whether dealing with a society or an organisation, culture can be understood through different types of approach. In particular, we distinguish between those that claim universal scope (Etic) and those that focus on identifying characteristics expressed uniquely within each specific group (Emic).

Each of the groups observed is characterised by its position on a scale of attitudes. By necessity, this method employs a comparative approach that risks imposing the researcher's logic on that of the observed subject. The major difficulty lies in the -specific definition of the attitudes selected or the cultural traits that would allow societies or organisations to be compared with one another. It is recognised that this approach requires standardised measurement tools which, in principle, will specify the relevant categories of analysis. Generally speaking, one must always ask what the concepts used mean to the groups concerned (Chevrier, 2000). We should therefore be cautious regarding universalist approaches. What interests us is understanding what is happening in a specific situation, in this case within a particular cooperative.

Emic-type approaches seek to grasp the cultural characteristics specific to a group and its members. They do so in terms specific to that group. The approach here is one of interpretation and is generally qualitative in nature, which is consistent with the aim of our research, which does not seek to generalise but rather to understand and explain.

Finally, the operational utility of research and theoretical development lies in its ability to guide decision-making. One

may, however, seek to identify the key interrelationships linked to the coherence of the system constituted by the enterprise and to the organisational and cultural characteristics that influence the cooperative's functions. The coherence of the system clearly appears to be a necessary condition for the cooperative's performance; the presence or absence of organisational and cultural characteristics will enable innovation and change, research and organisational learning, and facilitate team management.

In order to assess social utility, the framework of performance indicators will be based on five dimensions of a sustainable human development model: economic and social wealth, democratic governance, solidarity and environmental quality, and will effectively aim to quantify four fundamental principles (Marion et al, 2012): the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and relevance of cooperatives.

The evaluation of cooperatives using performance indicators based on the five criteria mentioned above will help to consolidate and shape the relationships between the various stakeholders, leading to the reformulation of governance reference models that will be informed by the challenges of sustainable human development. Indeed, (Lorino, 2007) theorised this aspect by distinguishing, within management science research, 'R' theories from 'I' theories. According to 'R' theories, the management tool represents reality, in a relationship of truth between the artefact and reality. Knowledge is thus objectified, reified, or even st , storable and transportable. Producing a tool amounts to making knowledge explicit and objectifying ways of doing and thinking. From this perspective, the management tool would have the capacity to represent the activity: it is up to the manager to design a tool that is as 'well-made' as possible, adhering as closely as possible to reality, which explains the choice of R theory.

Conversely, acknowledging the impossibility of tools to be fully representative, 'R' theories—which refer to interpretative theories—pave the way for taking into account meaning, subjectivity, and the significance individuals attribute to management tools. Producing an indicator is no longer about making knowledge explicit and rendering it objective; it is, more modestly, about producing new signs open to interpretation, which will be partly unpredictable, as it depends on situations that are unique and transient. The relationship with reality is no longer one of truth, but one of meaning and contingency. Such theories allow for a better understanding of the unexpected uses of tools (Martineau, 2012) and take greater account of the dynamics of changing practices.

Paradoxically, managers pay little attention to this issue. Most of the time, the principle of 'stewardship will follow' (Grimand, 2006) dominates the corporate world. This is also true, according to some authors, in the field of management science, which has sidelined the question of activity: "management research, particularly that which has 'taken the cognitive turn', often bases its approach on the study not of the full range of activities carried out by those within the organisation, but only of a particular type of activity: management activity". This selectivity leads them to focus solely on one category of actors within the cooperative: those who carry out 'management activities', that is to say, 'decision-makers and managers'. In this respect, according to (Theureau, 2000, p. 306), this constitutes research on management (research into the activities of decision-makers) rather than management research (research into the full scope of management decisions, i.e. the entirety of the activities of the organisation's stakeholders).

Thus, it is evident that governance lies at the heart of assessing the social utility of cooperatives, hence the reference to cooperative principles and values so that each cooperative can give meaning to this ambitious project and be reassured as to its purpose.

I. Research methodology

Once the basic principles for developing the criteria and indicators of the framework have been established, it will be necessary to proceed with data collection by identifying information sources and developing collection tools as the action unfolds during the evaluation and exclusively for this purpose. These include, for example, interviews, surveys, questionnaires or available statistics specific to the regions in the cooperative's environment, in order to inform the contextual indicators.

During the self-assessment process, monitoring data is collected first, as it is available in most cooperatives to build the monitoring tools; this identification process allows for the prioritisation of easily accessible indicators. Indeed, monitoring tools based on the cooperative's criteria and activities provide relevant and accurate raw data, which sometimes needs to be supplemented by the creation of other tools without, however, complicating the implementation of the initiative and with minimal effort. Admittedly, these are quite effective but do not particularly allow for the observation of changes, hence the need to resort to qualitative evaluation tools, the choice of which depends on the available resources, as they will be implemented and the resulting outcomes must be analysed. Moreover, the analysis contributes to answering the evaluation questions in the form of a grid that was

developed throughout the construction of the tools and that is the most efficient of the tools.

For interviews, a representative sample aiming for homogeneity is selected based on a guide where key questions are specified for a specific objective within a well-defined framework, accompanied by a data collection grid to facilitate the analysis of results. The distinctive feature of the group interview is that it allows for the exchange of viewpoints among participants to consolidate the information gathered. These groups consist of 6 to 8 people, with a shorter interview guide in the form of open-ended questions to facilitate the exchange of views. Observation involves observing and analysing interactions between stakeholders to complement other forms of data collection. The observer takes notes discreetly, ensuring they are as accurate as possible.

Finally, the case study involves examining specific cases of cooperatives as part of a self-assessment process, using a variety of data such as statistics, interviews and literature reviews, which leads to the drafting of case studies in order to understand the details of the mechanisms at work.

Any research process proceeds through several key stages that address these questions: the description of the phenomenon under study, understanding and explanation (Giroux, and Tremblay, 2002) and, in some cases, continues with the search for decision-making tools (Wacheux, 1996; Dupriez, 2005).

This leads us to question which epistemological paradigms should be employed in social science research, particularly in studies that take the cultural dimension into account (Dupriez and Paquet, 2005).

As regards the relationship between culture and management, the research objective is complex. It aims both to fill gaps in theories in order to explain reality, to identify concepts that enable an understanding of reality, and to propose decision-making tools in order to change that reality.

Insofar as, as is often the case in the study of the cultural dimension of management, the aim is to 'grasp a phenomenon from the perspective of the individuals involved in its creation, and therefore in terms of their own languages, representations, motivations and intentions',

this will therefore be an interpretative approach. (Allard-Poesi and Maréchal, in Thiétart, 1999). It is based on an understanding of phenomena from within and entails a different form of scientific verification. The validity of the research depends on the coherence of the explanation, not only with the facts, but also with the actors' experience.

Abductive reasoning is perfectly suited to our research insofar as we are seeking neither to test theoretical hypotheses concerning performance indicators in cooperative management (hypothetico-deductive reasoning) nor to formulate universal laws on this subject (inductive reasoning), but rather our research approach aims to understand and explain cooperative management in order to develop a high-performing, effective and efficient Moroccan cooperative model in light of the data collected in the field. We therefore find ourselves in the position of an 'interpreting observer' (Giordano et al., 2003:21).

Consequently, case study proves to be a particularly fruitful method of approach (Yin, 1989; Vas, 2005). Once the exploratory work is complete, the researcher will be able to formulate a number of hypotheses, assumptions regarding behaviour or relationships between the objects under study, expressed in the form of concepts. "When formulating a hypothesis, one makes explicit the logic of the relationships linking the concepts raised in the research question" (Thiétart, 1999). This leads us to consider the choice of concepts to be used.

The compatibility of the research methodology with both our research questions and our epistemological stance is essential. In this context, we have opted for the qualitative case study method, as its exploratory nature will enable us to understand, analyse and identify anomalies in Moroccan cooperative management through performance indicators.

It is hardly surprising that we have sought to identify indicators through which these dimensions can be measured. Indeed, concepts and their dimensions are not expressed in directly observable terms, hence the role of indicators. Indicators are objectively identifiable and measurable manifestations of the dimensions of concepts. However, there are many complex concepts for which indicators are by no means obvious, making it necessary to break down certain dimensions into components before arriving at the indicators (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 1995). The indicators, or the components that constitute them, are nothing other than the criteria used to understand the cultural dimension.

When it comes to taking the cultural dimension into account, the researcher is faced with criteria that are supposed to capture national culture and even organisational culture. In this field, as indeed in the field of management, the researcher must begin by putting together their own 'toolkit', that is to say, by distancing themselves from theories. As regards management, whilst several contributions from analytical theories may be retained, they must be transcended within a

holistic perspective that views the organisation as an open system.

The systemic approach will enable the cultural dimension to be considered as an active component of the system constituted by the enterprise. Armed with this conceptual framework, it is then possible to construct the theoretical framework required by the proposed approach. This will involve applying the theoretical contributions typically used to justify the cooperative's key functions. This dual perspective combines a systemic approach to organisations with a view of culture as a source of meaning and an integral part of the system constituted by the cooperative.

In an abductive approach, data collection takes place at two levels: initially to understand the field, and ultimately to emerge with a model. An iterative, process, this approach is built upon observations spanning over a year for this research. The proposed method—choosing criteria based on on-the-ground realities and constructing explanatory hypotheses based on the selected concepts—necessitates returning to the field to verify the consistency of these hypotheses and their ability to account for reality.

In the field, more than thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with cooperatives, which attributed the failure of a Moroccan cooperative model to emerge to the single issue of product marketing—a factor that is at odds with the philosophy of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), which does not prioritise financial considerations over cultural and human ones. Admittedly, the scope of the problem is much broader than this, requiring further investigation to address it.

In intercultural management, as in other fields, various observational tools are available to the researcher for identifying culturally significant elements. For the collection of primary data, two tools will be prioritised. Direct observation, whether participatory or not, can be a suitable tool for gathering information. Observation will be particularly suitable for capturing artefacts, the visible elements of culture. 'Direct observation methods are the only methods of social research that capture behaviours as they occur without the intermediary of a document or testimony'; "the method is particularly suited to the analysis of non-verbal communication and what it reveals: established behaviours and behavioural codes, the relationship to the body, lifestyles and cultural traits, the spatial organisation of groups and society, etc." (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 1995).

To validate the observation process, it may be useful for the researcher to draw up an observation grid. "Provided it is not treated as an end in itself, the exercise of systematic observation allows one's perspective to broaden and, if it goes beyond the grid, to pause at what is surprising in a particular place, under particular circumstances…" (Arborio and Fournier, 2005).

It is therefore not a question of confining oneself to a grid; on the contrary, it is a matter of establishing guidelines and reference points, thereby leaving room for the unexpected and for surprise. Constantly confronted with reality, the research subject evolves and becomes more defined, and it is in this way that an understanding of it is gradually built up.

Another key tool in intercultural management is the interview, which enables a better understanding of corporate culture as it is experienced, the perception of the implicit and the hidden, and the unravelling of cultural roots. 'The interview is a technique of in , designed to gather discursive data reflecting an individual's conscious or unconscious mental world' (Thiétart, 1999). Particularly suited to understanding the cultural dimension, the interview method is especially appropriate for analysing the meaning that participants attribute to their practices and the events they face. "Its main advantages lie in the depth of the analytical data collected and, in the flexibility, and low directivity of the approach, which allows for the collection of interviewees' accounts and interpretations whilst respecting their own frames of reference: their language and mental categories" (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 1995).

Throughout this study, interviews constituted the primary tool for data collection. However, long before this, the study only took place after two years of observing the cooperative mechanism in order to formulate an original and genuine research question at the heart of the fieldwork. This focused and selective observation was significantly supported by semi-structured interviews, which complemented the qualitative approach chosen for the final stage of this study. Moreover, the purpose of these interviews was to "overcome or set aside the defence mechanisms they put in place in response to an external view of their behaviour or thoughts" (Thiétart et al., 2007).

As regards the conduct of the interviews that formed the basis of the case studies, we opted to take notes rather than make audio recordings in order to ease any tension felt by the interviewees and ensure their candour by guaranteeing their anonymity; this was, of course, followed by a validation of the content by the interviewee. Moreover, at the start of each interview, following a brief presentation of the aims and objectives of the study, we clarified the academic purpose of our research as well as the confidentiality of the comments

gathered. Furthermore, these interviews lasted an average of three hours, and we conducted a second or even a third interview with the cooperative leaders to continue gathering criteria and indicators of social utility, particularly during the drafting stage, revisiting elements that required further clarification. Thus, several interviews took place in an official capacity after establishing contact with the cooperative leaders, either in conjunction with trade fairs, seminars or conferences, or by visiting youth centres in the towns of the cooperatives selected for the study. The interviews were conducted primarily with the leaders and chairpersons of the cooperatives and economic interest groups (EIGs), as they possess a comprehensive overview of the cooperative management system, as well as the actions, activities and social impacts of their own cooperatives, and are thus able to define social utility more rapidly and in concrete, con , and subsequently formulate the criteria and indicators for assessing social utility in order to ultimately construct a cooperative model. In total, fifteen semi-structured individual interviews were conducted, lasting an average of three hours, to define social utility as a first step, followed by ten group interviews as a second step with chairpersons and other cooperative members during the assessment of the cooperative's social utility and the development of the Moroccan cooperative model, as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Overview of the interview process

Type of interview	**Interview participants**	**Number of interviews**
Individual interviews	- Chairpersons of cooperatives	- Initial interviews: establishing contact, understanding how cooperatives work (5 interviews).
	- Chairpersons of Economic Interest Groups	- Second interviews: establishing social utility, listing criteria (5 interviews).
		- Third round of interviews: formulating indicators for assessing social utility (5 interviews).
Group interviews	- The chairpersons of cooperatives	- First round of interviews: Assessment of social utility using the indicators (5 interviews).
	- Co-operative members	- Second round of interviews: Development of the Moroccan cooperative model (5 interviews).
Total		**25 interviews**

Source: Author

As regards the criteria for targeting the five selected cooperatives, we adopted a comprehensive diversification approach across three main areas, namely: the age of the cooperatives, selecting both those in the start-up phase and others in full swing that have succeeded in establishing themselves both nationally, by joining economic interest groups, and internationally, by securing international contracts; and the location of the cooperatives, selecting several Moroccan cities. Furthermore, the following table presents the sample selected for the purposes of this study:

Table 2: Technical data sheet for the cooperatives studied

Cooperatives	Categories	Number of members	Cities	Year of establishment
Cooperative 1	Aromatic and medicinal plants	70	Ouezzane	2016
Cooperative 2	Argan	90	Taroudant	2006
Cooperative 3	Agriculture	20	Beni Mellal	2005
Cooperative 4	Agriculture	50	Sidi Kacem	2008
Cooperative 5	Crafts	30	Fez	2015

Source: Author

The interviews were therefore conducted in two main phases: an initial phase focusing on social utility, and a second phase focusing on the development of a Moroccan cooperative model based on indicators and criteria. Moreover, the first phase enabled the cooperatives to be involved in this ambitious academic project and to become an integral part of it. Secondly, it was necessary to focus the attention of the interviewees not only on activities and results but also on the impacts linked to cooperative values and missions. Subsequently, during the second and third interviews, the aim was to establish the social utility that would serve as the basis for evaluation. In the second phase, the primary challenge is to ensure that cooperative members take ownership of the evaluation processes as an internal learning and self-monitoring process for the cooperative movement, thereby

generally strengthening the movement's coherence and the collectively targeted social utility.

Following the validation of the key indicators, which are most representative of each dimension of social utility, the formulation of a collective perspective on Moroccan cooperative management—which seeks to assess long-term impacts rather than merely results—will lead to the development of the cooperative model.

II. Results and Discussion:

Data analysis enables us, by cross-referencing and weighting the data collected, to examine the information gathered during the data collection phase in order to answer the evaluation question. As a result, several factors have emerged to explain the phenomenon under study, which stems from a variety of causes. As for qualitative data, it can be analysed in two ways: firstly, if it is objectified as indicators to enable a shared analysis among the various stakeholders, and secondly, as a means of understanding processes and causal links. Once formalised in this way, qualitative information can be compared either using descriptors of the criterion that must be linked to an action, or using ratings in the form of scales to determine the level of achievement of the indicators.

This is a technique for analysing discourse in an objective and systematic manner, enabling the judgements of interviewees regarding the message put forward to be substantiated. Moreover, Bardin defines it as 'a set of communication analysis techniques aimed, through systematic and objective procedures for describing the content of messages, at obtaining indicators that allow the inference of knowledge regarding the conditions of production/reception of these messages". According to Vernette, there are two types of thematic content analysis: lexical analysis, which focuses on word usage, and thematic analysis, which focuses on the frequency of occurrence of themes. We opted for the latter, partly because we chose to work on five case studies per interview alongside two years of observation and internal documents, and partly because to be able to construct this model of a Moroccan cooperative. Moreover, during the interviews, together with the interviewees, we attempted to define the dimensions of social utility that served as themes during the lexical content analysis. Indeed, during this first stage, the units of analysis that formed the basis of the research were the dimensions proposed for the formulation of social utility. Secondly, based on these dimensions or criteria, we proceeded to formulate the indicators by translating theory into practice, linking the analysed data to our research framework.

Nevertheless, in line with our research methodology—particularly the qualitative approach—the most appropriate unit of analysis proved to be the theme (units referring to the same phenomenon), which represents a group of sentences referring to similar or related situations; hence the need for a detailed personal analysis on our part before resorting to the computer tool, which is based solely on the frequency of word repetition. Subsequently, after selecting the unit, we constructed a grid to group and analyse all the data by developing a dictionary of themes referring to our conceptual framework derived from the literature review corresponding to our research methodology.

However, before proceeding to the selection of themes, it was necessary to select sub-themes based on the repetition of phrases describing the phenomenon during the interviews. Indeed, the verbatim transcripts, drawn not only from the interviews but from all data collection sources without exception, were reproduced verbatim from the survey whilst adhering to the ethics of scientific research.

Table 3: Selection of dimensions and criteria for social utility.

Themes or dimensions	Sub-themes or criteria	Effects of social utility
Financial	- Better distribution of added value. - Economic solidarity among cooperative members. - Economic development.	- Promoting practices that foster harmonious social relations within cooperatives over short-term financial profitability, thereby ensuring the satisfaction and empowerment of cooperative members. - Reinvesting all or the majority of the revenue generated helps to motivate members and strengthen these bonds. - Long-term economic performance outlook. - Fairness in the distribution of the cooperative surplus and in treatment and equal opportunities.
Stakeholders	- Involvement of public authorities. - Customer satisfaction. - Sustained relationships with local and international partners. - Contribution to local communities. Environmental impact	- The social ties binding cooperative members are based on civic-minded, committed and interactive behaviour. - The establishment of these harmonious and interdependent social relationships helps to improve the cooperative's brand image. - Strengthening the legitimacy of leaders and fostering relational investment through communication, mutual collaborative learning, mutual involvement and support, mutual adjustment and the sharing of information with cooperative members and non-cooperative employees. - Anticipating reactions and resolving relational conflicts between stakeholders. - Leaders' commitment to and loyalty towards the cooperative project strengthen trust and solidarity in the long term and preserve cooperative values. - The sustainability and long-term viability of the cooperative must underpin all decisions involving the use of collective assets. - Environmental protection. Maintaining promising relationships with public authorities through agreements and partnerships
Governance	- Balance of power. - Fair treatment. - Autonomy and independence. - Commitment to the community.	- Empowering members to be open to considering others' views and to broaden the scope of their concerns. - Encourage members' external engagement, whether within cooperatives or economic interest groups (EIGs), to enhance the cooperative's profile and influence in making relevant decisions within a framework of civic engagement. Commitment and conviction through adherence to the cooperative project in alignment with the organisation's interests. - By enabling all members to have their say and ensuring that their opinions are given equal consideration, we create a sense of recognition that helps to boost their self-esteem and encourage innovation. - The principles of autonomy, solidarity, fairness and equal opportunities will enable the social and cultural aspirations of cooperative members to be fulfilled.
Organisational learning	- Capacity building. - Development of social innovation in terms of the type of users involved and the issues addressed.	- Contributing positively to the cooperative project through economic involvement, cooperative education and the training of cooperative members. - Members develop a strong ability to identify emerging issues or new expectations at an early stage and to provide appropriate responses. Diverse socio-professional and socio-cultural groups learn to interact and get to know one another better in order to foster intercultural openness.
Internal process	- Number of beneficiaries - Product quality - Improved quality of life for members - Value creation.	- As cooperative members are also their own users, they have a greater ability to offer goods or services that meet perceived needs, thereby indirectly contributing to member loyalty.

Source: Author

At this stage, an in-depth analysis of the cooperatives is carried out using the data collected, based on the thematic dictionary. Furthermore, during the vertical analysis, the three sources of information—interviews, internal documents and direct observation—are utilised to highlight the indicators by emphasising the representation of dimensions and criteria. As for the horizontal analysis, the analysis covers all the cases studied simultaneously in order to assess the importance of the criteria across all interviewees. This analysis helps to identify similarities and differences in the perception of impacts to

facilitate the construction of the cooperative framework and to identify the themes and sub-themes—that is, the most frequent or even most important dimensions and criteria—in order to highlight the indicators.

To complement the vertical and horizontal analyses, the cross-sectional analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the collected data by identifying points of convergence and divergence when formulating a general perspective on the Moroccan cooperative model. Indeed, when selecting indicators, we compared the indicators chosen by one cooperative against another to rank them in order of importance. From a global perspective, we compare the results and impacts identified by the assessment of social utility across the reference frameworks in order to construct the desired model. In light of the established dictionary of themes and sub-themes, we analysed the ten cases studied to compare the results obtained.

Whether vertical, horizontal or cross-cutting, the content analysis we have carried out remains incomplete and requires the use of IT tools, in particular high-performance software that is fast and suited to scientific research, namely Nvivo, which allows us to automatically detect the recurrence of criteria and dimensions in both a vertical and a horizontal, cross-cutting manner, horizontal and cross-cutting dimensions, which enabled us to synthesise the data by theme or node, firstly to construct social utility through the framework and subsequently to evaluate it in order to build the model.

For example, when discussing the governance dimension at the thematic level, the corresponding node appears alongside the theme in the software; however, any node can be modified, deleted or added as the study progresses. Nevertheless, human analysis remains essential at all times to make sense of the results generated by the software.

The cross-sectional analysis of the cooperatives has made it possible to identify the points of convergence among the various cooperatives. Firstly, the cooperatives come from different sectors ranging from agriculture to crafts, with different management styles; for example, the fourth cooperative has a board of directors given its high turnover, whereas the first cooperative is starting out with limited resources in addition tostate aid through the INDH as part of a scheme to encourage income-generating activities, which supports cooperatives with a grant covering 70% of all contributions in cash or in kind.

On the other hand, ranging from the south with the Taroudant Argan Cooperative, which possesses a distinctive culture and exemplary cooperative values recognised by several researchers, to the craft city of Fez, whose cultural heritage has been recognised by UNESCO, the towns where the cooperatives are based are diverse and present cultural and economic contrasts; for example, the province of Ouezzane is a small province with a low population compared to the towns of Sidi Kacem and Beni Mellal.

On the other hand, the interviewees belong to different age groups, particularly when it comes to cooperative expertise rather than just professional expertise. Admittedly, all the chairpersons possess incredible technical know-how, but some are still familiarising themselves with the cooperative concept, as is the case with the Ouezzane cooperative, which relies heavily on state support to get started in this process; while other cooperatives are quite familiar with it, such as the craft cooperative, which finds that the intersection between the cooperative spirit and the craft spirit is ever-present.

Furthermore, we have ensured significant female representation, with a rate of 40%. However, two of the five cooperatives already belong to an economic interest group ( ), resulting in differences in governance structures and stakeholder representation. Finally, and unanimously, all the cooperatives have benefited from both the funding and support programmes offered by various ministries and state bodies to move forward professionally in this cooperative venture. Indeed, after making initial contact, we spent a great deal of time with the chairperson explaining the implications of this study and its genuine positive contribution to the cooperative.

Having compared the characteristics of the cooperatives and those of the interviewees, it is now time to focus on the dimensions and criteria of social utility, to highlight the differences and similarities between the various cooperatives, as shown in the table below, which summarises the comparative study of the five cases:

Table 4: Summary of the comparative study of cooperatives

Dimensions of social utility	Criteria of social utility	Coop1	Coop2	Coop3	Coop4	Coop5
The financial aspect	Better distribution of added value	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Sustainability and financial viability of the cooperative.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Economic margin and distribution of reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Economic solidarity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The internal process	Improving members' quality of life	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Balancing production and marketing.	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
	To be known and recognised.	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Changes in traditional trade relations	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Product quality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Governance	Autonomy and fairness.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	The balance of power	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Supervisory powers	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
	Collective intelligence for cooperative behaviour.	No	No	No	No	Yes
Stakeholders	Customer satisfaction	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Sustained relationships with public authorities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Stakeholders' adoption of cooperative values and principles.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Information, participation and community engagement.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Organisational learning	Capacity building and the development of skills and expertise.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Motivation and passion for work.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Social innovation	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Training design	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The environmental aspect	Conservation of resources for sustainable development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Feeding the planet and reducing impacts on biodiversity	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Environmental sustainability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Alignment Three dimensions: economic, environmental and social	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Author

Thus, the results of the comparative table prove surprising, given that, contrary to the initial assumption that there would be a common consensus on the dimensions in the first place, for example, in the case of Cooperative 4, rather than referring to internal processes, it focuses primarily on quality and health and safety, given that it holds several international certifications and is focused on maintaining them, which may further skew the other dimensions, another example is that of the first cooperative, which mentioned only four of the six dimensions; this can be explained by a lack of experience, given that it was only recently established in 2016 and that the chairperson is illiterate and comes from a rural background, as shown in the table comparing the data and characteristics of the cooperatives.

However, with regard to the criteria, cooperatives may refer to the same criterion in one way or another but under various names; if we take the distribution of value for the financial dimension as an example, it was described by several other cooperatives either as the distribution of reserves or the realisation of surplus value, which meant we had to refer back to the interviews and observation notes as we went along in order to understand the nuances of each criterion after translating the data collected from the Arabic dialect.

Thus, to provide a clearer picture of the various dimensions, the IT tool presents a comparison of the frequency of the various dimensions during the interviews as follows:

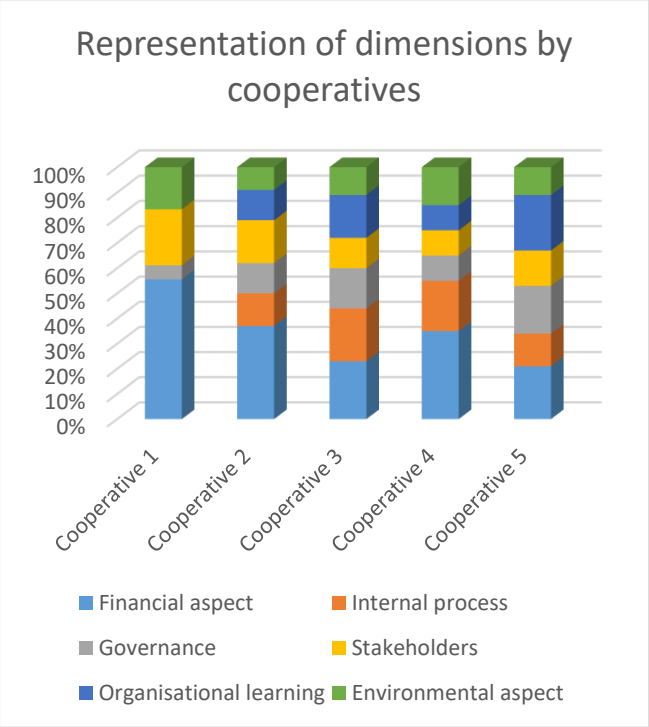
Table 5: Breakdown of verbatim quotes from the various cooperatives by dimension

Co-op	Financial aspect	Internal processes	Governance	Stakeholders	Organisational learning	Environmental aspects
Coop1	50%	-	5%	20%	-	15%
Coop 2	37%	13%	12%	17%	12%	9%
Coop 3	23%	21%	16%	12%	17%	11%
Coop 4	35%	20%	10%	10%	10%	15%
Coop 5	21%	13%	19%	14%	22%	11%
Average	33.2%	16.75%	12.4%	14.6%	15.25%	12.2%

Source: Author

Thus, the graphical presentation of the table provides greater clarity as follows:

Figure No.: Representation of the verbatim responses from the various cooperatives by dimension



Source: Author

According to the graph, the main aspect dominating the discussion is the financial dimension, but this percentage varies from one cooperative to another, with an average of 33.2%, which is quite logical given that the cooperative is an organisation that has not yet established itself on the global market and which nevertheless remains in a constant struggle for economic survival. In second place is the internal process, which places particular emphasis on quality and health standards, given the certifications required for the export of cooperative products; this represents a real opportunity for them to address a major problem hindering cooperative development, namely the marketing of products. Next comes organisational learning, with an average of 15.25%, on which cooperatives place great emphasis in order to strengthen their capacities and go further in this endeavour where every day is a new chapter of learning and self-development; indeed, cooperatives hold work and ethical conduct in the highest regard through training and learning. Next come stakeholders in fourth place with a rate of 14.6%, and finally, in last place, the two dimensions of governance and the environmental aspect, with approximate rates of 12.4% and 12.2%.

Generally, there is a balance between all the dimensions; however, the governance dimension, which holds the key to the success of all social utility organisations, has not yet been given its due weight in the value-creation process. This leads to conflict management issues that can bring a cooperative to an end, as is the case with several struggling cooperatives identified during the review of official documents from the Ministry of the Interior.

Indeed, unfortunately, many cooperatives find themselves lacking the core values of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and adopting a capitalist model by seeking profit at any cost and as quickly as possible, whilst ignoring the other dimensions of social utility; this leads to their failure and subsequent dissolution, which can be attributed to internal imbalance and poor governance.

Following a content analysis of the data provided by the interviews and in light of the tables produced for the indicators and impacts of social utility, the cross-sectional analysis enabled the creation of the table below, which brings together the convergences and similarities in the indicators used to construct social utility and the impacts of social utility in order to evaluate it.

However, the introduction of the temporal dimension into the construction of the model was imperative because, whilst evaluating the results of social utility, we were operating within a short-term framework; conversely, when evaluating impacts, we were projecting into the long-term future to seek sustainable impacts in harmony with cooperative values, which served as the basis for the construction of this model progressively in parallel with the evolution of results and ephemeral, transitory experiences, which in one way or another endows this model with an evolving character through the transformation of the socio-individual actions of the cooperative members.

Thus, this study will lead to the development of the cooperative model through the assessment of the impacts of social utility, generating further findings, contributions and recommendations whilst highlighting the limitations of this research and ways to address them.

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