Introduction and background

The United Nations Organization (UN) declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives worldwide to raise greater public awareness about the contributions of cooperative enterprises to economic and social development and about reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

This DELPHI study is performed in the framework of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives 2012, as a research to start a debate to contemplate the future of business organisations in general and cooperatives in particular, in order to determine the key factors of future cooperatives and to present the most probable future scenarios for these factors to an international expert panel.

The study is open to both international experts in the field through the Node network of the MILLENNIUM PROJECT from around the world, and to relevant international actors related to the cooperative world or linked somehow to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and government agencies.

The Millennium Project is a global think tank started in 1996 that brings together international experts from corporations, universities, NGOs, UN agencies and governments through more than 40 nodes around the world in a participatory process that explores how to address global challenges and build a better future through the use of forward-planning tools.

Methodology

The Delphi method seeks to both highlight convergences of opinion and consensus on specific topics, by questioning experts through successive questionnaires. The most frequent target of Delphi studies is to provide clarity to experts in areas of uncertainty in order to contribute to decision-making.

The technique has gone through several versions. Here, we will use the most commonly used in the framework of the MILLENNIUM project, the so-called "Real Time Delphi". In classic Delphi techniques, the opinions gathered in an initial round are presented to participants in subsequent rounds. By contrast, there are no rounds in the Real Time Delphi and the opinions are fed back to participants in real time. As in the classic Delphi technique, participants
Trend analysis performed prior to the survey shows a future with continued major changes and shifts taking place in the general economy and hence in the environment of business organisations in particular. The variables relevant to the future of organisations and companies are numerous but the most important that resulted from the trend analysis, classified according to areas, are given below:

AREA 1: ENVIRONMENT AND MARKETS
AREA 2: THE COMPANY
AREA 3: LABOUR MARKET
AREA 4: OTHER VARIABLES

For each of these variables, a number of future scenarios (to 2020-2030) have been drawn up, which form the basis of the Delphi survey put to experts and which are presented below.

To obtain these scenarios, a thorough review was performed of documents of existing research and studies into sources relative to the above variables, which is why only scenarios are included that were documented in such studies, thus avoiding untested assumptions. This is the cause that at times some scenarios may seem somewhat limited, because reliability of sources prevailed over completeness of its scope, although the participants had the opportunity to enrich these achievements with contributions and clarifications in a space for remarks provided in each question.

As far as the participants are concerned, over 100 experts from around the world have participated in this Delphi study, from a wide variety of countries, professional experience and sectors. The study was performed between February 23 and April 15, 2012.
DELPHI STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS: COOPERATIVISM AND OTHER MODELS.
Results

ENVIRONMENT AND MARKETS

As shown in the results, movements and shifts currently taking place or expected to take place in the coming years and decades with respect to globalisation, growth of emerging countries and consequent increase in global competition, will have a significant impact on the future of business organisations. In this regard, although the above phenomena may have a different impact on the future of cooperatives, it will still be significant.

The answers collected show that in the next two decades, the main sectors in which development is greatest are those related to the aerospace industry, health and safety, environment and climate change, energy, sustainable mobility and transport, and other industries related to chemistry, engineering and the agri-food industry. Also included are the fields of education, culture, sports and entertainment.

DELPHI STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS: COOPERATIVISM AND OTHER MODELS.
Furthermore, sectors using future technologies include nanotechnology, micro and nano-electronics, biotechnology, photonics, new materials and advanced manufacturing technologies. Thus, the likelihood of this scenario actually happening in the coming years is 80% according to the experts who participated in the study. Also included are ICT industries and services that support other industries and sectors. In this regard, special emphasis is given to new, currently non-existing developments in technology, which will be available in the coming years. In fact, many of the products and services that will be available in 2030 are not yet created. This, of course, poses a major challenge for companies.

The analysis shows that the evolution of the main sectors of the future described above, of which the outcome is highly likely to occur according to experts, will have a significant impact on business organisations as a whole. This variable reaches a score of 8.41 on a scale of 10, the highest score of the variables identified in this area. Next, the formation of partnerships and cooperation networks for technological development and investments in R&D is also considered to have a major impact on these organisations (8.29 out of 10), as well as the continuation of globalisation and growth of exports and foreign direct investment (8.17 out of 10).

Regarding the differential impact on cooperatives, the following stand out in particular: setting up an effective and booster framework for cooperation between the public and private sector, the development of biotechnology in agriculture in developing countries, and the existing gap between rich and poor and the role of the non-profit sector.

Furthermore, and of special relevance to cooperatives, these variables are precisely those that contribute most to improving the quality of life of people compared with the variables related to other business organisations. Apart from the above, the formation of partnerships and cooperation networks and greater purchasing power of developing countries, as shown in the following comparative table, are some of the variables with the greatest impact on cooperatives and on improving the quality of life.

<table>
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<th>IMPACT ON IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE</th>
<th>IMPACT ON COOPERATIVES</th>
<th>IMPACT ON BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS</th>
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<td>Formation of partnerships and cooperation networks</td>
<td>Evolution of the main sectors of the future</td>
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<td>Reduction of the gap</td>
<td>Evolution of the main</td>
<td>Formation of partnerships</td>
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<td>Gap in literacy levels between men and women in developing countries</td>
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<td>Increased purchasing power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences in innovation potential between rich and poor</td>
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<td>Growth in GDP and world exports of South American countries</td>
<td>Establishing an effective and booster framework between the public and private sector</td>
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<td>Development of biotechnology in developing countries in agriculture and industry</td>
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<td>Attraction of countries with higher population growth and per capita income</td>
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**COMPANY**

According to the consulted experts, and with a probability of occurrence of 81%, the company of the future will need to establish a networked system combining knowledge from several and diverse areas in an efficient and up to date manner. Thus, being open to knowledge from others, sharing knowledge and creating common knowledge will become priorities. Also, this group of experts believe that India will maintain its global leadership in the outsourcing of Information Technology. This scenario happening has a probability of occurrence of 79%. However, according to some, more countries must be included due to increasing competition.
The financial participation of employees will help organisations improve their competitiveness, and ensure a sustainable future. In this sense, besides a financial link, an effective participation of workers and worker-shareholders in the company is considered necessary. Also important are major changes in the consumer of the future, mainly because of a new middle class in emerging economies, a heightened sustainability awareness and technological development. Another fundamental variable concerns the changes in business models as a result of more expensive and less abundant capital, directly related to the higher interest rates caused by the distorted equilibrium between demand for capital and supply of savings. Finally, the importance of extra-financial factors must be highlighted and leading from that cashing in on value expectations in the medium and long term.

The company environment also establishes a clear differential impact on cooperatives compared to other business organisations. The participants in the study considered the variable relative to the development of comprehension management as opposed to management by objectives or authoritarian approach, as the variable with the greatest impact on cooperatives. Also noteworthy is the variable with a differential impact on cooperatives claiming that the cooperative model will be more developed in areas of energy, health, mobility and the financial sector, which besides pursues an "appropriate firm size" instead of a "grow-or-die" policy.

In terms of contribution to improving the quality of life of people, the variables clearly linked to cooperatives stand out again because of their greater contribution, such as a greater development of the cooperative model in areas of energy, health, mobility and the financial sector or financial participation of the employee.

LABOUR MARKET

According to the feedback from the Delphi questionnaire, the coming 20 years, the most likely scenario is that recruitment of professionals will take place through social networks with a lower cost and high quality. According to the participants, the probability that this happens stands at 85%. Also, according to this same group, it is highly likely (with 81%) that the globalisation of the labour market will lead to a migration of workers to places with attractive labour markets, resulting from the phenomenon "attracting talent" by some countries, while others will face the problem of a "brain drain".

Also, the impact on the future of organisations of this last variable of labour market globalisation will be major. It is followed closely with the same rating.
of 7.44 points by a variable closely related to this topic, namely the development of globally focused strategies to attract talent, in addition to the variable that includes the concept of "flexi-time" relative to reconciling work and family life.

Regarding the differentiating factor in cooperatives, variables with the greatest impact on cooperatives (family reconciliation and the "flexi-time" concept, worker migration as a result of globalisation of the labour market or the reduction of inequalities between men and women in education) are those that contribute most to a better quality of life for people in general, as in the other studied areas.

OTHER VARIABLES

Finally, this fourth section analyses the main ideas of other developments that could affect the progress of business organisations of the future, considering the impact on cooperatives, as well as on other variables which must be considered when determining trends for cooperatives.

On a whole, developments with a focus on ethics and values because of the greater impact on cooperative organisations are identified directly. These values relate to democratic management and equal rights, social responsibility and commitment to sustainability, solidarity values and fair trade. It is also considered that the development of the cooperatives themselves can be a major boost to employment and development, mainly in less developed countries; thus, cooperativism is considered as a significantly growing future option in emerging countries.

Conclusions

These results confirm the hypothesis of the differential value of cooperatives in the future of business organisations. Although cooperatives are facing challenges that are similar to other business organisations in an increasingly global, interdependent, open and competitive world, their contribution to the welfare of people and their quality of life is clearly greater. Therefore, cooperatives are an effective tool for the progress of developing countries and the resulting narrowing of the gap between rich and poor.

As stated in the UN slogan for the International Year of Cooperatives, the Delphi study confirms that "Cooperative enterprises help create a better world".
Acknowledgement

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The MP Node in Spain would like to thank all the experts that have participated in the Real Time Delphi Study. For further information, please contact Ibon Zugasti, Chair of the Millennium Project Node in Spain at i.zugasti@prospektiker.es