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SPANISH CO-OPERATIVES AND ECONOMIC CYCLES, 1942-2002

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1.Introduction.

There is a great deal of literature devoted to the study of the Spanish co-operative movement. However, until now no effort has been made to summarise the performance of co-operatives during the second half of the twentieth century. We know what happened from the last third of the nineteenth century when trade unions were consolidated in industrial cities. Also, great advances were achieved in the trade union movement during the first third of the twentieth century in the agricultural sector. However, no study has analysed this movement from a long-term perspective.

The main objective of this paper is to summarize the evolution of co-operatives from the early years of the Franco regime until the early twenty-first century. The purpose is to verify whether there is any correlation between the expansion or contraction of the cooperative movement as a result of fluctuations in the Spanish economy during this period, and to examine how far the paradigm is true that co-operatives respond better to periods of economic difficulty and rising unemployment¹.

This work investigates how changes in the Spanish economic structure affected the number and activity of co-operatives. Consumer, agricultural, fishing, industrial, transportation, housing, credit, education, services and health co-operatives had a different development framework which depended not only the law but also, changes in the productive balance of the Spanish economy. This process spanned the period from the era of dominance of agricultural cooperatives in the forties and fifties to the dynamism of industry and services from the late sixties until today.

¹ A recurrent topic is that during the economic crises, such that of the seventies and the current one, there was a proliferation of works that analyzed the impact of economic crisis on social enterprises. They did not always coincide, and in fact there are different diagnoses of the problem. Due to the negative impact that the crisis is having on the pace of business creation, Iturrioz del Campo (2010), p. 134, this will continue until a firm commitment to social economy enterprises to create employment and minimize the economic downturn, Melian & Campos (2010), pp.43-67. REVESCO, *Journal of Cooperative Studies*, No.100, "The response of the Social Economy is a global crisis."

2. - Data.

The statistical sources of this article come from the Ministries of Economy and Finance, and Labour and Social Affairs, divided into two time periods: 1942-1982 (Yearbook of the National Institute of Statistics) and 1983-2002 (Bulletin of Labour Statistics).

The richest data comes from the provincial records. With the exception of the records for 1942 to 1946, which include data on Morocco, the rest of the series maintains the same spatial distribution as at present. The annual data relate to the founding of new co-operatives, which gives us a dynamic dimension of the rate of business creation and co-operative membership. As a whole, this data must be viewed as a cumulative history, and therefore the figures from one year must be added to the next.

As secondary sources I have used the series of Historical Statistics of Spain, particularly the appendix devoted to studying the active population, employment, creation of new co-operatives and housing sector indicators. Also, I have consulted the records of co-operatives deposited in the General Archive of the Administration for the first years of the Franco regime. This is a very rich qualitative source which provides all kinds of details about the characteristics of co-operatives, and shows the tendencies of productive activities in a period marked by problems of food supply and industrial paralysis.

3. - The co-operatives.

With the advent of the Franco regime the Cooperatives Law of 1942 was enacted, which abolished the Law of September 1931, so beginning a new phase of political control of Spanish co-operatives and financial institutions, restricting the dimension of participation which is essential for this type of enterprise.

The Law set up a model of co-operative bound within a state superstructure, the *Obra Sindical de Cooperación*. One of its features was that it did not take into account the commercial dimension and the profit motive of co-operative societies. To know the real extent of the limitations imposed by this legislation, it must be compared to the original statutes and the financial records².

The Law of 1942 constituted the regulatory framework that regulated the sector until it was superseded by the Co-operative Law of 1974, when the transition to democracy had not yet begun³. The Law of 1974 would allow greater flexibility for co-operatives as genuine businesses, which had among their objectives the maximization of profit between their members. It eliminated one of the concepts which restricted the activity of co-operatives:

² Román-Cervantes, C & Bruno, N (1999)

³ Romero (1981)

the term "nonprofit". Finally, the Co-operatives Law of 1999 was intended precisely to consolidate the role of cooperatives as efficient and profitable institutions⁴.

The figures in Tables 2 and 3 show the change in the number of co-operatives by productive activity. Variations in the agricultural, consumer, services, industrial, fishing, rural banking, credit and housing sectors show the link between co-operatives and the changes in the productive sectors⁵. Thus, we would expect to see a drop in the number of farming co-operatives as well as the extent of the industrialised Spanish economy. If we consider the information from Table 3, agriculture accounted for 66.6% of all co-operatives registered during the period 1942-1946. This figure drops to 8.1% for the period 1997-2001.

The figures measure trade union/co-operative activity in this period. This is the case of housing promotions encouraged by the property boom of the fifties and sixties. The Franco regime boosted housing construction under the *Casas Baratas* (cheap houses) programme⁶. Although the stated goal was to give workers dignified housing and ownership, reality proved this false and the programme became one of subsidies for qualified workers, authority officials and civil servants. The proof of this can be found in the names of some co-operatives formed under the Law of 1942: Graphic Arts, Casas Baratas o Postmen, Northern Railway, Security Police, Madrid Electric' Union, Valencia Railway Workers, Civil Servants, Valencia Press Association, Tramway Employees, Press Association of Madrid, Catering and Allied Workers, Office Workers, Military Casas Baratas Co-operative, Cotton Loaders and Unloaders, etc⁷.

The Spanish housing boom began in the sixties under the Economic Stabilization Plan of 1959⁸. With the soaring energy prices of 1974 and 1976 and their impact on price inflation⁹, the possibility of co-operative members grouping together to buy land and building materials, to hire workers, and to supervise the entire construction process was an important advantage. From 1976 to 2001, the trend in building construction co-operative developments remained stable around at 13.6% for the whole period.

⁴ The purpose of the rule is defined in Article 1, which is to support the "*values espoused by the historical figure of the cooperative, ... with the ultimate goal of the members, which is profitability and the success of their business*", Borjabad (2001)

⁵ For example from 1978 include co-operatives 2nd grade.

⁶ 13/06/1911 Law, Gaceta de Madrid, CCL Year, Volume II, No. 164, 11/12/1924, CLLX Year, Volume IV, No. 345, 10/15/1924, CCLXIII Year, Volume IV, No. 345

⁷ General Archive of the Administration's Cooperative and Community Enterprise, No. 1.05-Vol I

⁸ Fuentes Quintana, E (1980), p. 94.

⁹ According to the ENI, the consumer price index (CPI) rose from 7.3% in 1972 to 26.4% in 1977. By 1984, the Spanish CPI had declined by double digits, reaching 9.0%. www.ine.es

Table 1

Development of Spanish co-operatives by economic activity (quinquennial averages, 1942-2001)

Quinquennial period	Agriculture	Consumer	Industry	Fishing	Rural Banking	Credit	Housing	Services
1942-1946	4,906	1,205	424	134	384	61	245	--
1947-1951	1,288	257	377	91	624	160	91	--
1952-1956	567	164	257	16	213	113	216	--
1957-1961	840	224	396	23	430	91	387	--
1962-1966	1,395	379	1,185	99	630	288	1,394	--
1967-1971	874	300	1,039	118	66	120	2,110	--
1972-1976	548	502	1,090	24	6	21	1,416	--
1977-1981	794	447	4,594	16	4	9	1,254	--
1982-1986	835	262	7,823	--	--	3	1,336	440
1987-1991	1,343	106	6,214	--	--	--	1,293	325
1992-1996	1,203	144	10,827	--	--	--	1,870	308
1997-2001	909	70	8,626	--	--	--	1,276	238
Total	15,502	4,060	4,2852	521	2,357	866	12,888	1,311

Sources: 1942-1982: Statistical Yearbooks, INE, Ministry of Economy and Finance;
1983-2002: Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Table 2

Development of Spanish co-operatives by economic activity compared to the quinquennial total (percentage of the quinquennial total, 1942-2001)

Quinquennial period	Agriculture	Consumer	Industry	Fishing	Rural Banking	Credit	Housing	Services	Total
1942-1946	66.6	16.3	5.7	1.8	5.2	0.8	3.3	--	100.0
1947-1951	44.5	8.8	13.0	3.1	21.6	5.5	3.1	--	100.0
1952-1956	36.6	10.6	16.6	1.0	13.7	7.3	13.9	--	100.0
1957-1961	35.1	9.3	16.5	0.9	17.9	3.8	16.1	--	100.0
1962-1966	25.9	7.0	22.0	1.8	11.7	5.4	25.9	--	100.0
1967-1971	18.8	6.4	22.4	2.5	1.4	2.6	45.6	--	100.0
1972-1976	15.1	13.9	30.2	0.6	0.1	0.6	39.2	--	100.0
1977-1981	11.1	6.2	64.5	0.2	0.1	0.5	17.6	--	100.0
1982-1986	7.8	2.4	73.1	--	--	--	12.4	4.1	100.0
1987-1991	14.4	1.1	66.9	--	--	--	13.9	3.5	100.0
1992-1996	8.3	1.0	75.5	--	--	--	13.0	1.0	100.0
1997-2001	8.1	0.6	77.5	--	--	--	11.4	2.1	100.0

Sources: 1942-1982: Statistical Yearbooks, INE, Ministry of Economy and Finance;
1983-2002: Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Table 3

Evolution of Spanish co-operatives by economic activity compared to the total for each period (percentage of the quinquennial total, 1942-2001)

Quinquennial period	Agriculture	Consumer	Industry	Fishing	Rural Banking	Credit	Housing	Services
1942-1946	31.1	29.6	0.9	27.5	16.2	7.0	1.9	--
1947-1951	8.3	6.3	0.8	17.4	26.4	18.4	0.7	--
1952-1956	3.6	4.0	0.5	3.0	9.0	13.0	1.6	--
1957-1961	5.4	5.5	0.9	4.4	18.2	10.5	3.0	--
1962-1966	8.9	9.3	2.7	19.0	26.7	33.2	10.8	--
1967-1971	5.6	7.3	2.4	21.1	2.8	13.8	16.3	--
1972-1976	3.5	12.3	2.5	4.6	0.2	2.4	10.9	--
1977-1981	5.1	11.0	10.7	3.0	0.1	1.0	9.7	--
1982-1986	5.3	6.4	18.2	--	-	0.3	10.3	33.5
1987-1991	8.6	2.6	14.5	--	--	--	10.0	24.7
1992-1996	7.7	3.5	25.2	--	--	--	14.5	23.4
1997-2001	5.8	1.7	20.1	--	--	--	9.9	18.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: 1942-1982: Statistical Yearbooks, INE, Ministry of Economy and Finance; 1983-2002: Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Agricultural and consumer co-operatives reflect a similar trend, growing quickly in the early years but losing weight relative to other sectors as time goes on. At this point it should be noted that caution is needed when interpreting the yearly data. For example, the number of agricultural co-operative decreased from 4,906 in the period 1942-1946 to 1,288 five years later. The same happened with the number of consumer co-operatives, which shrunk from 1,205 to 257. However, it should be noted that the statistics analysed figures from the thirties. The Law of Trade Union Unity BOE of January 26, 1940 stipulates that the co-operatives had to register with the National Register of Co-operatives. Those created before 1938 had to be legalised, so data from un-restructured agricultural unions should be included.

The control of food supplies to the population after the end of the Civil War¹⁰ forced all the mutual initiatives related to food production and supply to develop further. Most co-operatives under their fund rules provided consumer goods to members' families at reduced prices. In these terms were written, for example, the status of the Consumer Co-operative of the Education of the province of Alicante¹¹ and the Consumer Co-operative of officials of FET-JONS of the province of Jaén¹².

¹⁰ Barciela, C y López, M.I (2003)

¹¹ General Archive of the Administration's Co-operative and Community Enterprise Fund, 1.05-Vol I, Box 11833, File 16. Set up on 18/04/1944 and dissolved on 06/15/1952

¹² General Archive of the Administration's Co-operative and Community Enterprise Fund, 1.05-No Vol I, Box 11837, File 17. Set up 05/04/1944.

However, other co-operatives related to manufacturing activity had a dual purpose, not only of providing their members with cheaper food and other commodities, but also to ensure the social welfare of their members, including protection in the case of forced unemployment. This was the case with the Consumer Co-operative "The Metal" Madrid, consisting of members from the Union of Metal. Food was supplied to members on credit, to be deducted from their weekly pay-cheque. Footwear and clothing could also be purchased in the same way, although in these cases the repayment period could be up to 6 months. In the event that the member became unemployed, credit for the purchase of food was extended until he found employment. The co-operative even provided for up to 20% of the Social Fund to be distributed among co-operative members who found themselves in this situation¹³.

During the Franco period social security for unemployment protection was virtually non-existent. It reverted to the old system of social assistance rather than advance planning of social welfare. Things as basic as health and accidents at work were transferred to private sector insurance. In the words of Comin (2010), "*.. the Spanish authorities considered that unemployment insurance encouraged laziness and therefore the only government action against unemployment was to be the creation of jobs*"¹⁴."

When, as a result of the effects of economic stabilization plans, the country returned to the path of economic growth distribution co-operatives lost importance throughout the country. The consumer co-operatives saw a significant increase in the middle years of the crisis of the seventies, from 300 companies for the five years 1967-1971 to 502 in the period 1972-1976. It was precisely in the years of economic difficulties such as the first period of Franco's dictatorship and the crisis of the seventies, when co-operation was more closely related to the welfare of workers, such as the right to adequate housing and access to basic consumer goods at competitive prices, when co-operatives experienced strong growth.

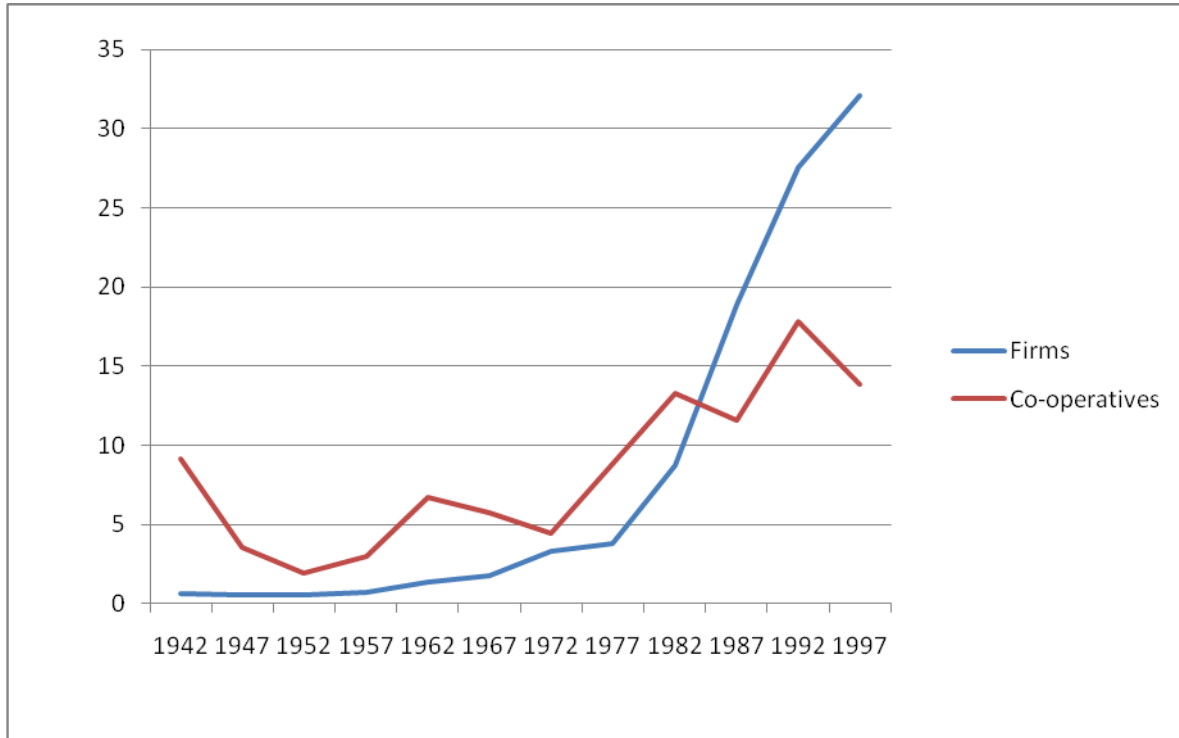
Graph 1 shows a comparison between the rates of formation of industrial co-operatives and the establishment of commercial companies. The five-yearly period 1982-87 was the turning point where the creation of business enterprises exceeded the previous five-yearly trend where cooperatives performed better. In the first half of the period 1942-1947, new business creation was stagnant, reflecting the weakness of the Spanish economy. However, co-operatives do better by showing that in times of difficulties, co-operative models can be effective. In the period, 1962-67, despite the improvement in the economy, the figures remain higher than co-operatives, especially in 1972-77 when industrial co-operatives proved to be a good solution to the sector's problems. With the economic growth of the eighties commercial companies grew stronger.

¹³ General Archive of the Administration's Co-operative and Community Enterprise Fund, 1.05-No. Vol I, Box 11838, File 114. Set up 07/14/1944

¹⁴ Comín (2010), p. 74

Graph 1

Comparison between the establishment of companies and industrial co-operatives, 1942-1997 (percentage)



Sources:

Co-operatives: 1942-1982: Statistical Yearbooks, INE, Ministry of Economy and Finance, 1982-2002: Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Companies: 1942-2001: Carreras, A & Tafunell, X (Coords.) (2005) *Estadísticas Históricas de España, siglos XIX y XX*, BBVA, pp. 768-769.

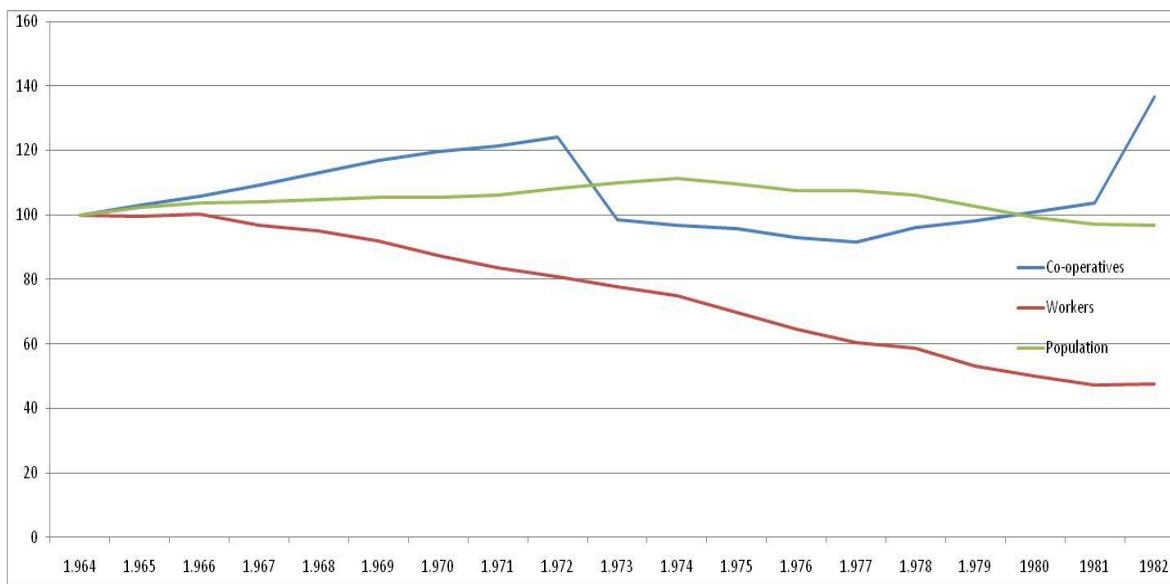
Graph 2 shows the relationship between the rate of formation of agricultural cooperatives, the development of the agricultural labour market and workforce trends. Strong growth in agricultural co-operatives may be observed during the period 1964-1974, including among the workforce, and a steep decline starting from the first price hikes linked to the oil crisis. The rate of formation of co-operatives would not recover until the mid-80's, coinciding with the end of the international crisis.

Regarding the remaining figures of the graph, the fall in the number of farm workers was a consequence of the loss of influence of the agricultural sector and the tertiarisation of the Spanish economy. One thing is significant: Although the proportion of farm workers falls despite the growth in the population, the number of agricultural co-operatives increases. This indicates that the strength or weakness of co-operatives is unrelated either to the number of workers or the general behaviour of the population. In fact, it was the economic

cycles and their effect on economic growth that could most affect the creation or disappearance of agricultural co-operatives.

Graph 2

Agricultural co-operatives, farm workers and work force, 1964-1982 (base year: 100, 1964)



Sources:

Agricultural Co-operatives, 1964-1982: Statistical Yearbooks, INE, Ministry of Economy and Finance, 1982-2002: Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Agricultural workers and work force: 1964-1982: Carreras, A & Tafunell, X (Coords) (2005): *Estadísticas Históricas de España, siglos XIX y XX*, BBVA, pp. 148-151.

3.- Modernisation

So far, we have reviewed the evolution of the Spanish co-operative sector from the mid-twentieth century to the early years of the current century. The performance of co-operatives over this period has been analysed by studying the most important productive sectors and their links to the cycles of the Spanish economy. In the second part of this paper I would like to examine more thoroughly the changes in co-operatives in adaptation to a more modern, globalised and competitive economy. To do this, I will study the co-operative sectors which have been most closely linked to the changes: Agricultural, industrial and services.

The incorporation of Spain into the EEC had different effects on different productive sectors. The co-operatives with the greatest commitment to agro-exports adapted the quickest to European legislation. Spanish agriculture had prior to admission to the

European club, a clear community orientation. The horticultural sector, for example, and especially the citrus industry exported more than 70% of their annual products, of which over 80% was directed to the Common Market. EEC Regulation 1035/72 established the role of agricultural producer organisations and farmers' market regulators, these organizations being formed mainly by co-operatives¹⁵

EEC membership required a rapid adjustment to production and trade structures, taking a similar path to that which most of the European agricultural co-operatives started had already begun, in the concentration and integration of larger co-operative units in order to increase the volume of production, facilitating co-operative relationships, creating new services and making joint investments.

Table 4 shows the production structure of agricultural co-operatives of the Spanish *Comunidades Autónomas* in 1986. A quick glance shows that Andalucía had the highest percentage of production in respect to olive oil, at 79.9%, and 55.9% of vegetable preserves, while its production of fruit and vegetables was also significant. Cataluña was the next in importance because it had the greatest number of co-operatives, mainly devoted to the production of animal feed (36.1%) and dairy products (34.5%). Cataluña was followed by Comunidad Valenciana, which produced 36.4% of fruit and vegetables; and the co-operatives of Castilla and León, concentrated in production of dairy products and agricultural inputs (17.8% and 15.3% respectively). The next is Galicia, notable for animal feed and dairy products; Murcia and Navarre with very similar figures; with the co-operatives of the Canary Islands and Extremadura coming last.

In 1987, co-operative wine cellars¹⁶ produced 48.41% of the country's wine, in a year when restrictions were being placed on the expansion of vineyards as recommended by the Common Agricultural Policy. However, table 5 shows that the number of co-operative wine cellars and Agrarian Transformation Societies¹⁷ continued to grow, An increase that was reflected not only in the number of partners, but also in the market capitalisation per vineyard.

¹⁵ Juliá Igual & Segura García del Río (1987), p. 70

¹⁶ Juliá & Segura (1987), p. 69

¹⁷ Román-Cervantes, C (2008)

Table 4
Distribution of the production of agricultural co-operatives, 1986
(percentages)

C. Autónoma	Inputs	Fruit and Vegetables	Preserve Vegetables	Food Oils	Animal Feed	Dairy Goods
Andalucía	10,5	11,7	55,9	79,9	9,0	1,2
Aragón	9,4	2,8	0,5	1,3	9,3	0,9
Asturias	3,3	--	--	--	2,3	--
Baleares	2,2	2,9	0,1	--	--	7,1
Canarias	1,0	16,9	--	--	0,1	0,6
Cantabria	1,0	--	--	--	0,6	--
Castilla- Mancha	5,0	2,6	--	6,8	7,2	20,1
Castilla y León	15,3	1,0	--	0,2	11,4	17,8
Cataluña	10,1	14,4	7,7	4,7	36,1	34,5
Extremadura	6,2	5,2	--	3,4	3	--
Galicia	9,9	0,1	--	--	13,2	7,8
Madrid	--	0,8	--	0,3	--	3,5
Murcia	0,8	1,6	22,6	--	0,1	--
Navarra	5,5	1,8	9,9	0,4	3,6	4,0
La Rioja	1,8	1,0	2,5	0,1	0,3	--
C.Valenciana	17,0	36,4	0,3	2,4	3,0	1,8
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Note:

- 1.- The output is computed in tons.
- 2.- Inputs: considered as the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and animal feed.
- 3.- Fruits and Vegetables refers to trading volume. It includes potatoes.
- 4.- Animal Feed includes industrial dried corn.

Sources: *Directorios Provinciales de Entidades Asociativas Agrarias*. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1986): "Spanish Agriculture, Fisheries and Food", <http://www.mapa.es/ministerio/pags/biblioteca/>

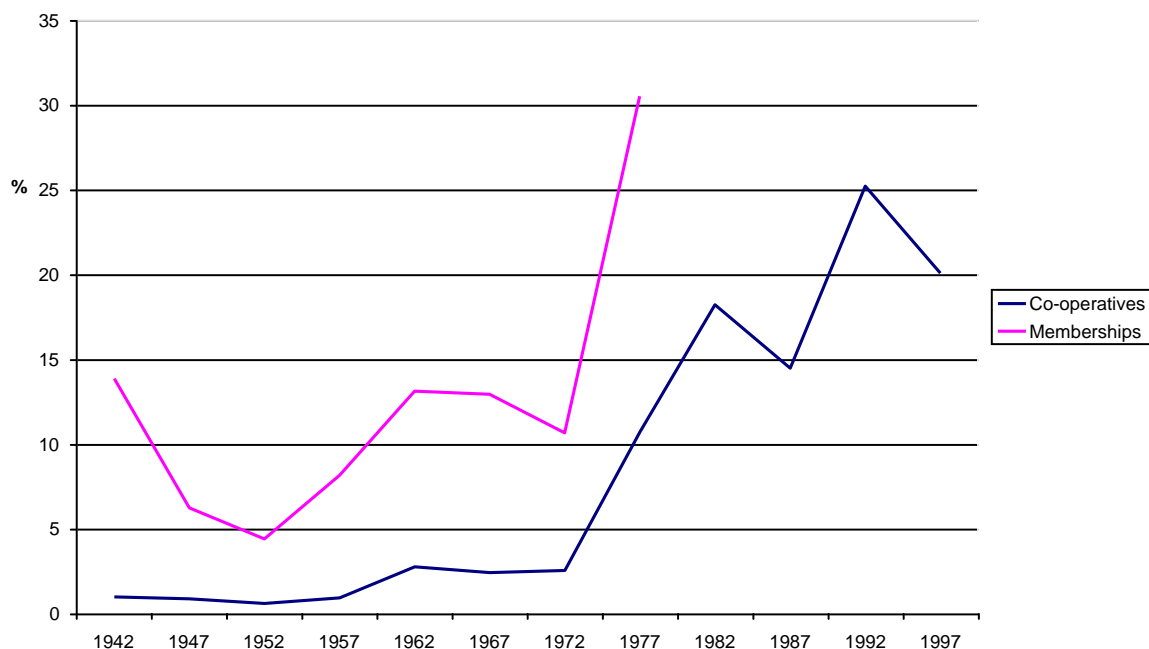
Table 5
Development of co-operative vineyards and Agricultural Transformation Societies in Spain, 1988-1992.

Year	Number	Memberships	Capital (mill, ptas)
1988	131	13,922	1,385
1989	136	13,981	1,371
1990	138	13,990	1,388
1991	144	14,147	1,413
1992	146	13,778	1,461

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Agriculture, *Spanish Fisheries and Food in 1990*. Madrid

Graph 3

Development of industrial co-operatives and membership, 1942-2001 (in percentages)



Sources:

Industrial Co-operatives, 1942-2001: Statistical Yearbooks, INE, Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Memberships: 1982-2001: Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Security

The service and industrial sectors are the best indicators of the degree of modernisation of a country. The data in Graph 3 show this trend. Both the number of industrial co-operatives and their members developed similarly. With the exception of the first five years, the trends of the two sets of data for the rest of the period studied were similar: growth in the sixties, a brief relapse in the early seventies, before beginning a period of intense expansion. The reason was the decision of the workers to form a front of co-operative members against the destruction of jobs/workplaces due to falling industrial production. The growth of industrial co-operatives and worker ownership which began in the seventies was the result of a paradigm shift in economic structure.

4.- Conclusion

The aim of this work was only a brief approximation to see if the evolution of co-operatives were linked to fluctuations in the economy. It has been shown that the pace of formation of new co-operatives was connected to changes in production structure that Spain was experimenting with. The most evident proof of this is the replacement of the agricultural model with industry and services.

It has been demonstrated that in times of food shortages and supply problems agricultural and consumer co-operatives performed better than commercial companies in increasing their rate of formation. We have also seen how, as in any other company in the productive sector, growth responded to stimulus from the market.

The process of tertiarisation was intensified from 1980, from the starting point of the beginning of the crisis of traditional agriculture in the sixties. The new phase of capitalist expansion that began in the eighties of the last century was characterised by the opening-up of the national economy. This required the adoption by the cooperatives of various strategies for survival in a hostile arena, moving inevitably by towards modernisation and consolidation into larger units.

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