

Social economy clusters and structural change. The Anecoop and Mondragon innovation cooperative systems cases,

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Abstract

Purpose The aim of this research is to analyze the key factors of the structural change in a competitive and innovative way of the clusters of cooperatives.

In a globalized world, clusters, as territorial systems of production, need to change into innovation systems to keep their competitive advantages and to develop (Carbonara, 2004; Zeitlin, 2008). Literature has analyzed two major success models if clusters structural change, on one hand, a private business way and on the other hand the government oriented way (Cooke, 2003). This article focuses on a third way of structural change introduced by Gallego and Chaves (2015): the collective social entrepreneurship model.

Design/methodology/approach – Qualitative comparative methodology is used in both case studies. Deep survey based on semi-structured interviews to privileged witnesses identified in a networking data collection strategy. The study analyses two paradigmatic success clusters of globalized cooperatives: Mondragon, integrated by industrial worker coops, and Anecoop, an agriculture cooperative group.

Findings – The study confirms that, from an evolutionist perspective, the systems of cooperatives (clusters of cooperatives) are able to articulate in the meso-level structural change processes and emerging meso-institutions (as meso-rules in the sense of North, 2005) that are functional and determinants of structural change processes.

Research limitations/implications – The study has theoretical implications in terms of understanding the innovative structural change in clusters of cooperatives.

Practical implications –The present study gives a framework to responsible of cooperative clusters and to government policy makers to develop policies that improve their structural change into more competitive and innovative systems.

Originality/value – This study uses for the first time qualitative methods to analyze cooperative success clusters in innovative structural changes.

Keywords: Innovation systems, cooperatives clusters, government policy, structural change