


# The challenge for Mondragon: Searching for the cooperative values in times of internationalization

Organization  
2014, Vol. 21(5) 666–682  
© The Author(s) 2014  
Reprints and permissions:  
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1350508414537625  
org.sagepub.com  


**Ramon Flecha**

University of Barcelona, Spain

**Pun Ngai**

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, China

## Abstract

Competitiveness today requires being able to operate at a global scale. The financial crisis invigorated this requirement, posing new challenges to the economic viability of conventional companies and demanding alternative organizational forms of production. Although a wealth of research has focused on capitalist companies, little attention has been paid to the way these challenges affected worker cooperatives. Drawing from a qualitative case study of the Mondragon Cooperative Group, this article discusses the obstacles to internationalization faced by worker cooperatives, as well as the specific conditions and implications involved. In particular, the article analyzes Mondragon's contradiction between being forced to expand and trying to keep cooperative values during this expansion. Two main actions aimed at responding to this contradiction are analyzed: the creation of mixed cooperatives and the extension of the corporate management model. The analysis of this process will shed light on actions for the global expansion of worker cooperatives.

## Keywords

Cooperative values, expansion, internationalization, worker cooperatives

---

## Corresponding author:

Ramon Flecha, Department of Sociological Theory, Philosophy of Law and Methodology of the Social Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Barcelona, Av. Diagonal, 690-696, Torre 4, Planta I, 08034 Barcelona, Spain.  
Email: ramon.flecha@ub.edu