

The dynamics of inter-organizational cooperation in Economic Interest Groups: Case of EIG TARGANINE in Morocco

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Abstract

Inter-organizational cooperation has become a major challenge for the development of organizations. Inter-organizational relations are enormously successful in terms of cooperation, especially when talking about Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) companies. Today, several forms of cooperation appeared in Morocco with the creation of groups, unions, networks and federations. Through this paper, we study the dynamics of inter-organizational cooperation and its contribution to the economic and social development of an Economic Interest Grouping (EIG) of women's cooperatives in Argan. We proceed for our analysis according to the dialectical approach as it was adopted by Dameron (2001, 2002), via the study of the cooperation relations of the EIG TARGANINE, based on a qualitative approach carried out by semi-structured interviews carried out with the president of the EIG and the leaders of the member cooperatives

Keywords: Cooperation, Inter-organizational relations, EIG, Cooperative, Economic and social development.

Introduction

Faced with changes in the environment and in the dynamics of competition, we are now witnessing the emergence of new forms of organizations and structures of cooperation. Thus, numerous studies show that cooperation is necessary for the emergence of technical innovations and for the growth of the economic and social performance of organizations. In the social and solidarity economy, cooperative relationships are generally approached in terms of groups, unions, networks and federations. However, these forms of cooperation correspond well to the values of the social and solidarity economy since companies in this sector engage in cooperation, with a view to achieving common objectives while preserving their autonomy and their social values. Certainly, inter-organizational cooperation is a major asset for the development of this economy whose values are articulated with the objectives of cooperation, which favors the promotion of this economy that seeks to reconcile economic activity and social integrity. In Morocco, the development of these forms of cooperation shows to what extent cooperation makes it possible to promote the economic and social dynamics of these organizations and constitute a new way to create their development. How do inter-organizational cooperation relations contribute to the economic and social development of companies, especially economic interest groups? In our article, in order to understand the cooperative relationships of these organizations, we are inspired by the dialectical approach as adopted by Dameron (2001, 2002). This dialectical vision positions inter-organizational relations as an essential factor in the sharing of resources and the construction of a social identity. Thereby, In this perspective, the first part of our paper deals with the theoretical framework of cooperation and cooperative relationships. The second part is devoted to the research methodology. While, the third part presents the results and the discussion of the empirical study of the case of an Economic Interest Grouping of women's cooperatives of Argan TARGANINE.

1. Theoretical frame

The development of cooperative relationships is present from the earliest writings on management (Taylor, 1911; Follet, 1918). Changes to this multidimensional concept have been made to respond to the growing intensity of competition, the growing power of customers and the development of new technologies. It

should be noted that cooperation is the stake of most economic, political or social relations. Its theoretical framework differs according to the context of its use and the ways in which it has been approached.

1.1 Notions of cooperation and inter-organizational cooperative relationships

The etymology of the word cooperation associates the Latin root “operare” with the prefix co. Literally, it means working together. The first meaning of the term cooperation provided by the dictionary Le Robert, is to designate "the action of participating in a common work" introducing a teleological dimension, which is not the only meaning. The main neighboring meanings proposed for this term are: “contribution”, “collaboration”, “support” and “competition” (Dameron 2005a). Cooperation is synonymous with oriented collective action, which brings into play relations of dependence and bonds of solidarity between actors. Cooperation can take several forms: voluntary, spontaneous, consented or negotiated cooperation (Boyer & Orléan, 1997), what has been mentioned at the level of game theory, which very explicitly refers to intentionality (Guerrien, 1995). From an organizational perspective, cooperation is generally defined as a strategy that fits into a relational approach alongside confrontation and avoidance (Koenig 1990, 2004). In addition, inter-organizational cooperation is a formal or informal agreement, established in a long-term perspective, involving interaction between two or more independent organizations that combine or pool assets and resources for the purpose of efficiency or efficiency (Barthélemy, Fulconis and Mothe 2001). In other works, with a strong sociological orientation, the accent is placed on the very essence of cooperation, that is to say, its meaning as a finalized collective action (Boudon, 1979; Mancur, 1978; Reynaud, 1991), cooperation is thus accepted as not being able to emerge on its own, it requires the construction of a collective actor, the definition of a common objective and the existence of shared constraints that frame this construction. Some works in management sciences show the different situations requiring cooperative relationships between organizations and explain the underlying mechanisms and the implications for the situations studied (Baum & Rawly, 2002; Forgues, et al., 2006) . For their part, Galaskiewicz (1985) and Schermerhorn (1975) develop a functionalist approach by grouping together different variables and highlighting three “arenas” within which these relations are exercised (obtaining resources, political stakes and legitimacy). Another more dialectical approach makes it possible to highlight the fundamental tensions underlying these relationships: cooperation/individualism, sharing and trial of strength, which generate asymmetries and imbalances in the relationships between cooperating organizations (Josserand, et al, 2004). Thus, to measure the contribution of inter-organizational cooperation to the economic and social dynamics of SSE enterprises, we then propose the conceptual framework of the dialectical approach as proposed by Dameron.

1.2. Dialectical dynamics of cooperation according to Dameron

Dameron (2001, 2002) emphasizes that the development of transversal, intra- and inter-organizational cooperative relations covers an increasingly frequent mode of coordination in the face of market requirements and needs, which explains the development of organizational cooperative relations in an organization's development framework. Thus, two forms of cooperation are proposed: complementary cooperation and community cooperation.

1.2.1. Complementary cooperation

According to the work of Dameron (2001, 2005a), complementary cooperation is based on a calculative rationality, at the level of an individual, who will seek, through his cooperation, additional resources in others to satisfy a personal objective. Based on the contributions of the sociology of actors (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977), it follows that the interdependence of individual interests, itself based on the complementarity of resources, is the foundation of this form of cooperation. . Cooperation is therefore possible when it gives rise to an exchange between individuals on the basis of “give and take”. She stresses that the co-operators do not form a team but a coalition, in the sense of Cyert and March (1963), moreover, cooperation develops as long as the cooperators perceive an individual strategic interest in their participation. The use of contracts favors this form of cooperation, which makes it possible to specify commitments and guarantee the reciprocity of relations. Next, the incentive mechanisms provided for contractually appear as means of reinforcing the congruence of the cooperators' objectives. The logic of contractualization thus appears necessary to formalize expectations and reveal the actors, it participates in

the construction of commitments based on the reciprocity of relationships (Joly & Mangematin, 1995). Moreover, relational theories, denouncing the under-socialization of contractual approaches, attempt to remedy this deficit by introducing the notion of trust (Granovetter, 1985; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992, 1994). The notion of trust is the psychological counterpart of the dynamics of cooperative relations. Beyond the mere structure of exchanges, the history of relations counts (Zajac & Olsen, 1993). Thus, complementary cooperation is based on a contractual approach guided by the notion of trust (Dameron, 2005b).

1.2.2. Community cooperation

For Dameron (2005a), community cooperation is based on a rationality of identity. It is based, in part, on the need for individuals to belong to a group: "Cooperation with another is a way of telling him that we belong to the same universe as him, that our identities are close" (Bernoux, 1999). The theoretical currents of social identity underline the mechanisms of identification that are at the origin of these cooperative behaviors and in particular self-categorization and social comparison (Elsbach, 1999). Also, the search for recognition of a form of status as a member of a community and the desire to preserve and develop this common identity are the basis of cooperation. Ouchi (1980), referring to the concept of mechanistic solidarity of Durkheim (1930), presented the clan as a third mode of trade regulation distinct from the hierarchy and the market. This mode appears particularly efficient when, on the one hand, the congruence of the individuals' objectives is strong and, on the other hand, the measurement of individual performance is ambiguous or even impossible. The principle of adherence to common objectives supersedes individual interests. Traditions appear as "implicit rules" (Girin, 1996) and are recognized by clan members. They make it possible to confer legitimacy on authority, promote reciprocity of exchanges and respect for common values and beliefs. On the other hand, the measurement of individual performance is ambiguous or even impossible. The principle of adherence to common objectives supersedes individual interests. Traditions appear as "implicit rules" (Girin, 1996) and are recognized by clan members. They make it possible to confer legitimacy on authority, promote reciprocity of exchanges and respect for common values and beliefs.

In terms of his analysis, Dameron (2004) studies the development of cooperative relationships by seeking to deal with both forms of cooperation: complementary and communal, at the same time. These words thus shed another light on cooperation; it is not only opportunistic behaviour, but also the development and protection of a common identity.

1.2.3. Cooperation evaluation grid

According to Dameron, three dimensions thus appear transversal to the two forms of cooperation: purpose, interdependence and commitments. For this author, three attributes define complementary cooperation: the congruence of individual interests, the complementarity of resources through the division of labor and, finally, inter-individual commitments. Similarly, three attributes constitute community cooperation: common goals, group membership, and interactions with external groups.

Table 1: Dimensions and attributes of cooperation

Dimensions & attributes	Complementary cooperation	Community cooperation
Purpose	Congruence of individual interests	Shared goals
Interdependence	Work division	Group membership
Commitments	Internal commitments	Interaction with external groups

Source : Dameron (2005b)

By analyzing several writings on the dialectical approach dealing with cooperation, as adopted by Dameron. We have designed the following evaluation grid:

Table 2: Cooperation evaluation grid

Form of cooperation	Assessment axes	Criteria retained
Complementary cooperation	Congruence of individual interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Give-and-take relationship and reciprocity of relationships ➤ Access to additional resources ➤ Access to the zone of uncertainty (coping with information asymmetry)
	Work division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Exercise of power and the rules of governance ➤ Sharing of responsibilities and measures of incentives and sanctions in the event of conflict ➤ Sharing of cskills, knowledge and training ➤ Complementarity in divided functions
	Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Autonomous construction of internal rules ➤ Informal mutual control and relationships of trust
Community cooperation	Shared goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community of interest for the project ➤ Assimilation to project objectives
	Group membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Group interactions ➤ The existence of a common time ➤ Develop a social identity ➤ Degree of social influence ➤ Respect for values and beliefs
	Interaction with externals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Practice of leadership: the qualities required of the leader ➤ Cultural and industry standards

Source : Dameron (2001, 2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b)

Through our study, we will appreciate the role of this new practice in the promotion and development of SSE companies, through the case study. We will see the necessity of cooperation for the success of their objectives and their principles.

1.3. Cooperation through the economic interest group (EIG)

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is considered as a dominating lever of development in several countries, thanks to the capacity of its actors to create forms of cooperation in several sectors of activity. The cooperation of SSE organizations is a social construct and not simply an outcome determined by market or state forces. The organizational change of these organizations towards cooperation results from the search for more resources and the achievement of a certain level of development. This organizational change can take the form of the concentration, pooling and expansion of stakeholders. These last two types seem more specific to SSE companies and more rooted in the territories (Richez-Battest & Malo, 2012). Pooling is based on the willingness of several structures to cooperate to carry out common activities, ranging from contractual cooperation to institutional cooperation. Priority is given to the pooling of human or material resources, in order to achieve economies of scale, or even to non-integrated grouping through the creation of a group or union of SSE organizations (Tchernonog, 2010). For the broadening of stakeholders, the overriding objective is the reduction of the expected costs of a broadened mobilization of resources, whether monetary, market or non-monetary, expressed in terms of access to financing. Or access to skills, within formal decision-making bodies or in ad hoc structures (Richez-Battesti & Malo, 2012). In Morocco, we are witnessing the emergence of new forms of cooperation (groups, unions, federations and networks) which testify to an ability to strengthen ties and promote the sharing of collective resources and skills. Noting the

case of economic interest groups (EIG) of cooperatives, which play an increasingly important role in the economic and social development of their territories, their attractiveness has grown especially since 2005, the year of the launch of the National Initiative for human development (INDH) encouraging the creation and sustainability of Social and Solidarity Economy structures (Ahrouch, 2011). The EIG is a group formed by a set of cooperatives to strengthen production and exchange capacities and to expand distribution circuits. They are “aggregation bodies for small farmers able to carry out economically viable and socially inclusive development projects” (Berahmani, 2016). It participates in implementing all appropriate means to facilitate or develop the economic activity of its members and improve or increase the results of its activity. It is a predominantly contractual form, because the contract of the grouping freely sets the organization, operation and administration, as well as the rights and obligations of the members (Law 13-97). In order to illustrate the place that EIGs can take in their economic and social development,

2. Methodology

2.1. Description of the process

In order to study the role of inter-organizational cooperation relations in the economic and social development of EIGs, data collection was carried out through semi-structured individual interviews scheduled during the months of February and March 2019. Techniques used are : audio recording and note taking. The interviews were fully transcribed, in order to be able to analyze them correctly. We have taken the case of the EIG TARGANINE, through a process of contextualization of cooperation relations according to the criteria proposed by Dameron (2001, 2002). The choice of the case, EIG TARGANINE, is motivated by its seniority and its experience dating back to 2003 as the first group of Argan cooperatives on its territory. As well, the adoption of this sector of activity for our study is justified by the fact that argan is one of the main specific products of the southern region. The research required several coordination contacts before moving on to semi-structured interviews with the president of the group and the leaders of the member cooperatives. The analysis of interviews conducted with the EIG and its interactions with other cooperatives confirmed the presence of two forms of complementary and community cooperation, as detailed by Dameron (2001, 2002). The research required several coordination contacts before moving on to semi-structured interviews with the president of the group and the leaders of the member cooperatives. The analysis of interviews conducted with the EIG and its interactions with other cooperatives confirmed the presence of two forms of complementary and community cooperation, as detailed by Dameron (2001, 2002). The research required several coordination contacts before moving on to semi-structured interviews with the president of the group and the leaders of the member cooperatives. The analysis of interviews conducted with the EIG and its interactions with other cooperatives confirmed the presence of two forms of complementary and community cooperation, as detailed by Dameron (2001, 2002).

2.2. Fields of study

TARGANINE started its activity in 2003. It pursues a socio-economic goal by creating work opportunities for often-marginalized women. Its members are mostly women who participate in the harvesting of the fruits of the argan tree and/or the manufacture of derivative products. The group of women is organized into six cooperatives, two of them are content with the crushing of fines while the other four produce Argan oil and its derivatives. Its main missions are:

- Group purchasing;
- Marketing for export and on the Moroccan market;
- Promotional communication around cooperatives;
- Product marketing;
- The quality label and fair trade;
- The training of staff supervising cooperatives.

Table n° 3: Cooperatives belonging to EIG TARGANINE

Cooperative	Creation date	Geographical area	Date of integration of the EIG	Number of members
TAITMATINE	2002	Rural municipality TIOUT	2003	97
TARGANTE	1994	Urban municipality AIT	2003	95

		BAHA		
TOUDARTE	2004	Rural community IMSOUANE	2007	93
AJDIGUE N'TARGANINE	2005	Rural municipality TARGA N'TOUCHKA	2007	100
TAGMATE	2001	AZIAR Rural Commune	2007	100
TAMAYNOUTE	2004	Rural municipality DRARGA	2007	72

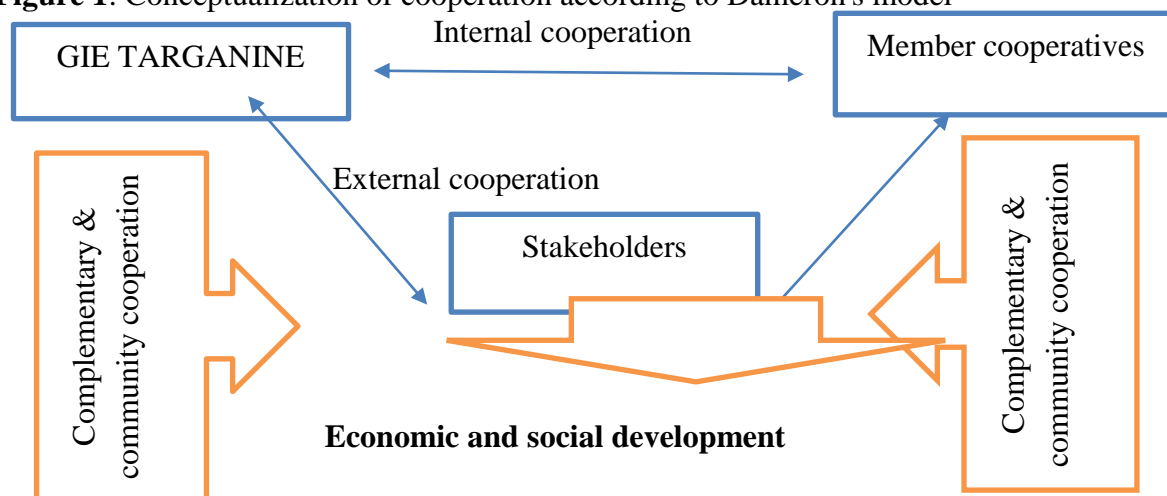
Source : EIG TARGANINE website

TARGANINE has today reached a level of technical and economic maturity which makes it a reliable and independent supply partner. The group has been able to optimize the technical-economic, social and governance dimensions of its cooperatives thanks to the particular attention paid to the expectations of local stakeholders (communities, cooperative operators, municipalities, NGOs, etc.) in connection with the context socio-economic and cultural specificities. The key factors for the success of this group can be seen in the traceability system and the quality of the products marketed through the obtaining of certifications for its cooperatives, such as Ecocert Bio, Equitable or the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) (site of the EIG TARGANINE).

2.3. Conceptual model of analysis

Our model is based on the two forms of complementary and community cooperation as Dameron has adopted them, according to an intra and inter-organizational vision. The cooperative relations between EIG and its members (internal cooperation) and EIG and its stakeholders (external cooperation), while measuring the contribution of these two forms of cooperation to their economic and social development.

Figure 1: Conceptualization of cooperation according to Dameron's model



Source: Dameron (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005)

Table n°4: attributes and dimensions of cooperation for cooperators in models of SSE companies (Dameron model)

	EIG	cooperatives	Other external actors
Purpose objectives and of cooperators	New markets New sources of raw material	New products New technologies Increase production Increase turnover	SSE Promotion Stakeholder consultation Inclusive economic and social development

Formalization of cooperation	Medium	Weak	Strong
Commitment of cooperators	Formal and informal commitments	Informal relationships based on trust	Formal and contractual relations

Source: Dameron (2001)

Table 5: Criteria for evaluating cooperation in the EIG TARGANINE case

Evaluation criteria	Complementary cooperation	Community cooperation
Purpose of the objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management autonomy • Remuneration by objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to work together
Interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills sharing • Definition of roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group membership
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy in management • Trust relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for cultural and sectoral values

Source: Dameron (2001)

3. Results and discussion

In the light of the interviews conducted, we noted a set of findings, which we analyzed according to the criteria for evaluating the dialectical approach, according to Dameron, which structures the practice of cooperation and the cooperation relations of the EIG .

2.1. Survey results

Our survey of the president and leaders of member cooperatives revealed the following results:

2.1.1. Complementary cooperation

The complementary cooperation is clearly visible in the cooperative relations within the EIG TARGANINE, its members share the same objectives and common interests while keeping their own autonomy through individual objectives. The nature of their similar work, the uniqueness of their principles and values favored the success of their grouping towards the desired development. The attributes and values of complementary cooperation, according to the model adopted, are as follows:

➤ Congruence of individual interests

○ *Give and take relationship*: Give-and-take is a strategy that promotes cooperation and imposes itself through the reciprocity of cooperating interests. Knowledge of the underlying motivations of its partner and the identification of identical values have enabled the EIG and its members to share common economic and strategic goals, while remaining independent. This strategy is based on the existence of reciprocal relations between the group and the member cooperatives in the formulation of commercial objectives on the one hand, and the sharing of resources and skills on the other.

○ *Ability to access complementary resources*: This allows members of the group to access a set of advantages and advantages depending on the nature of the need:

▪ *Sharing of in-kind resources*: Each cooperative must cover its supply of raw materials and only have recourse to the group in case of urgent need. The majority of cooperatives affirm the availability of the raw material at harvest time. Thus, the sharing is currently done on the basis of the projected needs of each cooperative and their financing capacity. The group can intervene to meet the financial needs of certain cooperatives in difficulty.

▪ *Sharing of customer orders*: Group marketing enabled the increase in the group's turnover, which rose from 1,000,000 MAD in 2005 to 50,000,000 MAD in 2018. Thus, the distribution of customer orders is the subject of a distinction between the customers of each cooperative and those of the group. This order management has increased their turnover by an average of 40% per year.

▪ *Knowledge sharing*: The training policy of the EIG TARGANINE, for the benefit of the members, is based on several axes:

✓ Literacy program (reading, writing, arithmetic), civic, religious, hygiene and health education.

- ✓ Legal training for the constitution of the cooperative.
- ✓ Training in environmental education.
- ✓ Training on extraction technique, oil quality, traceability, hygiene, food safety and cooperative management

In this sense, the presidents of the various cooperatives have benefited from the following training:

- ✓ Training in project management and working groups
- ✓ Training in sales and marketing techniques
- ✓ Training in communication techniques

○ *Management of uncertainty*: The sharing of information within the group implies the strengthening of cooperative links and shared decision-making. Thus, the respondents confirm that this sharing does not affect the basic foundations and principles of governance of their cooperatives. On the contrary, they were able to cope with the asymmetry of information held by the other partners. This management of uncertainty has made it possible to expand the marketing network and reduce the transaction cost of their cooperatives. The members of the EIG were able to benefit from an estimated price 20 to 30% higher than that offered by traditional stores. Thus, thanks to their introduction to the EIG, they were able to increase their results (between 30% and 150%) and stabilize their income (an average of 30,000 dhs per member per year).

○ *Autonomy in management*: The group manages the sharing of resources according to the productive capacities of each cooperative, following a necessary stock made up of raw materials, to which the members can have access if necessary. Nevertheless, the cooperatives manage their own stock, alongside shared interests, to fulfill their orders.

➤ **Work division**

○ *Exercise of power*: The sharing of power within the EIG promotes the maintenance of strong relations and the strengthening of links with other stakeholders. Noting here that the leaders are autonomous in the management of their cooperatives, because they can make their decisions without influence or involvement of the management of the EIG. In addition, female managers are often relatively better trained in management and marketing. Strategic decisions are taken by the general assembly, as for operational decisions, they are taken by the board of directors or the members of the executive office.

○ *Incentives and sanctions in case of conflict*: Management within the group makes it possible to establish personal rather than professional relations, which favors the emergence of relations of social influence. It should be noted here that the management of the EIG confirms the existence of synergy and a favorable climate between the leaders of the different cooperatives. Thus, the president ensures the absence of conflicts and tensions within the group.

○ *Sharing of cskills, knowledge and training*: Cooperation allows collective learning faster and better. Learning takes place at several levels: the group teaches its partners through training, group work, the use of new working techniques, the sharing of experience, etc. This learning also constitutes a factor of integration and cohesion (comments of the leaders of the cooperatives surveyed). Also, the development of managerial skills allows managers to have a commercial and technological watch to face the evolution of their profession.

○ *Distribution of tasks*: The production of Argan is an inherited culture for the majority of the members (70% of the women are over 55 years old), thus, we have noticed a complementarity in the assignment of tasks between the least and the most experienced. For the leaders, the distribution of responsibilities is done according to the priority of the commercial objectives, while respecting the procedures of the quality and the development of the products of the Argan, in order to meet the needs of the internal and external market.

○ ➤ **Commitment:**

○ *Autonomous construction of internal rules*: The management of the EIG seeks to create an environment conducive to cooperation. This environment based on the participation of each of the members of the member cooperatives, through the construction of rules and internal standards of conduct. These are the clarification of objectives, the transparency of the communication circuit with members, democracy and equality in decision-making, etc.

○ *Informal mutual control and relationships of trust*: The control methods are well designed within the group, they will contribute to the establishment of a climate of trust between the members, thanks to the

reference to the standards (the standards of quality and marketing) or in the hierarchical and personal relations (group work, specialization). In this context, trust is based on the logic of informal commitment through the sharing of skills and professional awareness. While, the principle of control within the group reflects the application of the basic principles of the SSE.

2.1.2. Community cooperation

Community cooperation appears in the external relations of the EIG with its environment, also in the identity shared with its members via common values and rules. The attributes and values of community cooperation, according to the model adopted, are as follows:

➤ **Shared goals**

○ *Community of practice of interest*: E. Wenger (2000) defines a community of practice as "a group of individuals who share an interest, a set of problems or a passion for a subject and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this field by interacting on an ongoing basis". Shared commitment is based on the ability of participants to relate their knowledge to each other ("absorptive capacity" in W. Cohen and D. Levinthal, 1990) and the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. Thus, we found that the members of the group are engaged in the practice of cooperation, through their stories and their common values, which contributes to collective learning better and faster. According to the remarks of the president, the leaders are motivated by their membership of the EIG.

○ *Assimilation to project objectives* : The formulation of the objectives by the presidents is done by referring to the good practices and the experiences of the member cooperatives, which allowed the achievement of the majority of the objectives set.

○

➤ **Group membership**

○ *Group interactions*: Cooperation relations are manifested concretely within the EIG. The production of Argan is a job that promotes interaction between members, this, according to the leaders and the president of the EIG, promotes group work and a sense of cooperation, which has a positive impact on the level and the quality of cooperative production.

○ *Existence of a common time*: The members share the majority of the time of their days in common. In addition to their joint work, many joint activities were organized by the management of the EIG in favor of these cooperators: training, trips, excursions and cultural events, which enabled the leaders to accumulate more faculties and competence in the management of their cooperatives.

○ *Development of a social identity*: The group is very involved in the content the work he cares about and values the most. Its commitment to a specific social meaning that characterizes the construction of its social identity. The majority of women leaders affirm their commitment to the core values and principles of cooperation. Group work promotes the development of a common social identity between EIG and its partners.

○ *Degree of social influence*: For Edgar Morin, social influence is part of a process of interaction between the person who exercises power and the target of this power (Morin, 1996). Within the TARGANINE group, the management of power is part of a participatory framework, all members can vote for decision-making. Nevertheless, the presidents can have a social influence on their groups within a framework of pure management and organization of work.

○ *Respect for values and beliefs*: All the cooperatives surveyed respect the values and beliefs of their host territories. These principles relate to their experiences and their own lives (solidarity, pride, transparency, work with dignity, respect for customs, etc.). All of the women affirm their attachment to traditions and apply them in their daily lives.

➤ **Interaction with externals**

○ *Cultural norms* : The cooperatives surveyed value the skills, resources, raw materials and finished products from their territory, thanks to the training and support actions carried out by the management of the EIG.

○ *Industry standards*: The six cooperatives consulted were able to obtain certificates from ONSSA, BIO, ECOCERT and IGP, which are compulsory for accessing the market. The TARGANINE group was able to

support its cooperatives to obtain their certificates, in order to improve their products and guarantee their continuity. The group and its members seek to achieve the best quality in order to be able to confront the competition and meet the requirements of the external market, while introducing more sophisticated means and equipment (comments of the president).

○ *External relations*: TARGANINE has several fair trade partners. These partners are located in different countries: France, Italy, Austria, Belgium and Morocco. Since fair trade relations are a little more complex than simple commercial relations, the group has not yet finalized other partnership projects. Its main partners include the Émile group, the OXFAM group and L'OREAL.

3.1. Discussion of results

The practice of cooperation allows the EIG and its members to be able to share a set of resources and skills with positive effects on their economic development on the one hand and their social development on the other. Based on the analysis of the results of the semi-directive interviews, we have identified two types of cooperation relationships:

3.2.1. Cooperation as a lever for economic development

Overall, the observed TARGANINE group shows strong growth in turnover for a fairly good level of overall profitability. Its growth was expressed in terms of increased sales volume and the positioning of its offer, especially on the external market. Its economic development has been manifested through the following points:

- *Group marketing*: The rigorous organization of the production and marketing of Argan oil has allowed more direct access to export markets, which are more profitable than the local market. After improving the quality of Argan oil, the price per liter rose from 35 to 300 dirhams in 2019, which makes it possible to remunerate the work of cooperative members well. Thus, the average annual income of members has improved from 5000 dhs in 2005 to 30000 dhs in 2018.

- *Effective sharing of resources and skills*: The management of the EIG is responsible for communicating the information necessary for concluding contracts with customers, while granting the necessary resources and promoting the sharing of skills between its members. The group was able to ensure the improvement of the quality of its products and the growth of its production through its transparency concerning the sharing of resources and skills vis-à-vis its cooperatives.

- *Negotiations with suppliers and customers*: The difficulty in finding new outlets to sell their production and the lack of financial means to obtain raw materials, have pushed the cooperatives to join the EIG. This one plays the role of intermediary between producers and consumers, it establishes relations with national and international distribution networks, in order to prospect for new customers and be able to market its offer. It also works with suppliers, generally cooperatives or intermediaries, to ensure supplies for its members.

- *Improved learning and skills*: The cooperative relationships were able to promote the coordination links between the leaders, which has a remarkable impact on the growth of their management faculties and their entrepreneurial spirit. This sharing allows the reduction of risks regarding the availability of the resources necessary for production. Also, the planning of customer orders facilitates the organization of work. As a result, an increase in their economic performance has been observed.

- *Shared decision-making power*: The exercise of power within the EIG and its cooperatives promotes collective decision-making, facilitates the possibility of negotiation and contact with external partners. This consistency in the exercise of power allows cooperatives to concentrate on their work and thus devote more effort to improving their productivity, which increasingly strengthens their economic growth.

- *Shared communication strategies*: The main objective of the communication policy is to reach the intended target and inform customers of the existence of the EIG offer. This does not exclude a communication policy shared with member cooperatives. Thus, the group is always present in commercial events such as shows, fairs and exhibitions at local, national and international level. Also, the group often uses direct marketing techniques such as mailings, catalogs and brochures.

- *Shares of targeted training*: Specific training plans have been dedicated to female managers in the area of management and marketing. The training also concerns women producers and covers practically all the disciplines that are necessary for them in their daily life such as literacy, hygiene, quality, etc. all of these

training courses have explicitly or implicitly promoted the economic development of the EIG and its members.

- *Consultation with stakeholders*: Respecting standards and sectoral charters, in order to support the local social fabric and participate in the development of the territory, are the major objectives of the leaders surveyed. The women of the GIE manage to follow the rules and respect the charters of the argan sector, especially for everything concerning the standards of product quality and hygiene. Also, they were able to improve their relationship with the institutional environment thanks to the support and guidance actions of the group.

3.2.2. Cooperation as a lever for social development

The dynamic of cooperation on the economic level has also been extended on the social level in order to improve the living conditions of women and to strengthen the action of the cooperatives to which they belong and, consequently, to contribute to the development of their municipalities and their regions.

- *Personal and family development*: After their introduction to the EIG, the members were able to develop several qualities: being financially independent, the ability to meet their needs, being independent, forging their own personality, being able to read and write and becoming familiar with their institutional environment, etc. Indeed, they now have stable incomes and can cover their medical care and participate in the schooling of their children.

- *Raising the intellectual and cultural level of women*: The sharing of training and experiences has developed a network culture, shared skills and the exchange of good practices within the EIG. Also, the consecutive improvement in the standard of living of women has led to their better integration into community life and into marketing circuits. The cooperation has not only enabled the members to improve their standard of living, but also their professional skills, their social status and the well-being of their families. This has enabled their growth and the social development of their cooperatives.

- *Cooperation between cooperatives*: The member cooperatives of the EIG bring together women who have common economic and social needs and who come together to meet them.. In our case, the sharing of ancestral know-how (the crushing of Argan nuts) is the first stage of cooperation between the cooperators. However, they have difficulties in other areas (management, marketing and technicality), so they work together, within the EIG, to bring better production and strengthen the distribution network and achieve the desired development.

- *Commitment to the community*: The TARGANINE group participates in its environment through a set of actions: construction of a social fund, training and awareness of the preservation of the Argan tree, assistance to DOUAR associations, etc. This allows all cooperatives to contribute to the sustainable development of their community.

- *Good social conditions*: TARGANINE accreated a social fund since 2009, thanks to the partnership with a major client (BASF Beauty Care Solutions), which aims to finance social actions (health or cultural), in order to improve living and working conditions in member cooperatives. It consults with several NGOs via several programs: the construction of crèches, the acquisition of school transport, the development of the premises of certain cooperatives, etc. The programs also focused on training for the preservation of the environment, the protection and enhancement of local products, etc.

- *Multi-partner relationships*: TARGANINE and its cooperatives engage in relations with their environment made up of several partners: the municipalities, the Office of Development and Cooperation, the associations of the district, the National Agency for the Development of Oasis and Argan Zones , the National Human Development Initiative, the NGO etc. This cooperation is based on development programs drawn up by the State to strengthen the players in this sector. These relationships allow the EIG to promote its partnerships with its environment, facilitate its commercial transactions and support its support and monitoring strategy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we sought to understand the cooperative relationships and their ability to reconcile economic and social issues within an EIG. The case of the TARGANINE group has made it possible to identify the presence of two forms of cooperation, complementary cooperation and community cooperation. According to the analysis grid proposed by Dameron (2003), which identifies the different mechanisms for managing

situations of cooperation within the group, the two forms of cooperation demonstrate that it is possible, based on structural choices, managerial and cultural, to create the conditions for economic performance on the one hand and social performance on the other. This lies in the sharing of resources and skills based on the collective rather than the individual, autonomy in management, a democratic decision-making process and respect for standards. Therefore, the impact of these forms of cooperation on the increase in profitability and consequently on the improvement of social conditions within the EIG, can be explained by the role of these relations in the construction of a culture of shared growth.

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