

# Structural and organisational changes, governance and the social strategy of cooperatives: Empirical evidence from the Italian wine sector

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper develops some of the most relevant themes emerging from the recent literature on cooperatives, as: the concept of collective entrepreneurship, the dynamic of relations between members and corporate bodies and between members and management, the sycho-social aspects of the relationship between members and the cooperative, and the social strategies of member-cooperative integration and patronage returns. It analyses the crucial governance and organizational elements of cooperatives using as a case study the Veneto region, which plays a relevant role in the Italian wine supply chain. The study focuses on five research themes concerning: the economic, organizational, and social governance impacts caused by the structural changes carried out by the cooperatives; the coherence between the aims of the cooperative and those of its members; the differentiation factors characterizing the members and the identification of those helping / not helping the member-cooperative integration; the presence of members clusters and the possibility of adopting specific models of integration by categories of members; the identification of the most suitable instruments of integration. For these purposes a case study approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses, was adopted. The results highlight that the aggregation processes carried out by the cooperatives increased the heterogeneity of the membership, which complicates the decision-making process. The member segmentation is feasible and it represents an operational tool for the top management. The study results demonstrate that quality projects help to revise the member-cooperative relationship and to remove cultural constraints to its development.