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Managing Paradoxical Tensions in a Coopetitive Context

Horizontal Multiple-Firm Coopetition

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Abstract: The paradox that unifies cooperation and competition may be at the root of several tensions (Gnyawali and Park, 2009). The multiplication of partners enhances both coopetition complexity and the tensions related to that multiplication. Consequently, the management of tensions is essential for coopetition to evolve over time. Our exploratory study investigates a case of horizontal multiple-firm coopetition to understand the evolution of tensions and their management. In this article, we identify the paradoxical tensions of coopetition as they develop over time and the related risks. The coopetitors multiply their coopetition strategies to overcome tensions. Additionally, we note that the management of paradoxical tensions contributes to the evolution of coopetitive relationships and allows partners to benefit from coopetition opportunities. Last, the case reveals the existence of a coopetitive portfolio for coopetitive managers.

Keywords: coopetition management, paradoxical tensions, horizontal multiple firms, coopetitive portfolio, wine.

Abstract: The paradox that unifies cooperation and competition may be at the root of several tensions (Gnyawali and Park, 2009). The multiplication of partners enhances both cooperation complexity and the tensions related to that multiplication. Consequently, the management of tensions is essential for cooperation to evolve over time. Our exploratory study investigates a case of horizontal multiple-firm cooperation to understand the evolution of tensions and their management. In this article, we identify the paradoxical tensions of cooperation as they develop over time and the related risks. The cooperators multiply their cooperation strategies to overcome tensions. Additionally, we note that the management of paradoxical tensions contributes to the evolution of cooperative relationships and allows partners to benefit from cooperation opportunities. Last, the case reveals the existence of a cooperative portfolio for cooperative managers.

Keywords: cooperation management, paradoxical tensions, horizontal multiple firms, cooperative portfolio, wine.

Introduction

Coopetitive relations are by nature unstable (Park and Russo, 1996) and dynamic (Luo, 2007) and thus a source of tensions for firms (Gnyawali and Park, 2009). These tensions often stem from paradoxes resulting from the relationship between competition and cooperation (Child and Faulkner, 1998; Lewis et al., 2002; Gnyawali et al., 2008). Cooperating competitors expose themselves to the risk of transferring key knowledge to their “competitor-partner” (Gnyawali and Park, 2009). Moreover, the increase in the number of partners enhances coopetition complexity (Dagnino and Padula, 2002; Gnyawali et al., 2008), competition problems (Choi et al., 2010) and collaborative formalization (Dana et al., 2013) and inevitably leads to tensions. The dynamics of coopetition depend mainly on the firm’s capabilities to manage these tensions (Gnyawali and Park, 2009).

However, even though there have been some efforts made in recent years, coopetition still deserves more empirical research (Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1995; Lado et al., 1997; Bengtsson and Kock, 1999 ; Tsai, 2002 ; Luo, 2007 ; Bouncken et al., 2015 ; Granata et al., 2018 ; Galloway et al., 2019), particularly the topic of coopetitive tensions (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014). It has been emphasized that coopetitive tensions need to be managed. In fact, the management of tensions appears to be essential to coopetitive relationship success (Walley, 2007; Gnyawali and Park, 2011). Coopetition is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of competition and cooperation among firms (Granata et al., 2018) to overcome resource scarcity, to strengthen market power and increase competitiveness (Bouncken et al., 2015; Li et al., 2011).

The question of how paradoxical tensions emerge and are managed by coopetitors is important to understand how a coopetitive strategy can evolve positively over time. Yet, the literature has not offered a framework to identify paradoxical tensions in a coopetitive context. In particular, horizontal multiple-firm coopetitive relationships that involve numerous players who are rivals at the same stage in the industry value chain remain under-studied (Gnyawali et al., 2008). We present herein an exploratory study investigating a case of this type of configuration to better understand the evolution of tension and risk management over time. Using the Smith and Lewis (2011) framework, we try to identify and thus understand the management of this specific coopetitive context.

In the wine industry, numerous firms in competition have been collaborating over long periods and continue to do so. However, little research has focused on the evolution of coopetition in this developing sector (Dana et al., 2013), even though, in practice, this phenomenon is

increasing. We analyze the wine sector as an industry in which coopetition is common (Choi et al., 2010 ; Dana et al., 2013) especially the French wine sector dominated by numerous firms in competition (Granata et al., 2018).

The dynamics and complexity of coopetition, and particularly because it is a young research field, lead us to use qualitative research. It is broadly acknowledged that the use of case studies is especially appropriate for exploring new phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984) that evolve over time (Langley, 1999). Thus, case studies are ideal for the study of coooperative situations (Gnyawali and Park, 2011). It is also essential to examine the development of coooperation processes (Bengtsson et al., 2010). Taking a longitudinal approach, we study the case of a professional union of winegrowers in Pic Saint-Loup, located in the southern region of France. By leading a three-step primary data collection process, including unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and observations, we try to show all existing paradoxical tensions and explain their evolution and management over time. This longitudinal study included twenty-three firms involved in the winegrower union.

The management of tensions is essential for coooperation to evolve over time. Overcoming coooperative tensions permit firms to benefit from both competitive and collaborative advantages.

The contribution of our research is three-fold. First, this study shows that the loss of freedom of action, created by barriers to entry, appears to be the main creator of tension in coooperative strategies. Second, this research highlights that coooperators multiply coooperation strategies to overcome tensions. Third, this exploratory study shows that the management of paradoxical tensions contributes to the evolution of coooperative relationships and allows firms to benefit from coooperation opportunities. This case study follows the transition from the cooperative management of competitors to the management of a coooperative portfolio.

1. Literature

In 1992, Novell's CEO Ray Noorda coined the term 'coooperation' to define the philosophy behind his alliance with several competitors.

1.1. Multiple firm coooperation

Coooperation belongs to the highest-cost inter-organizational relationships (Lado et al., 1997). Coooperation is defined as a relationship in which competition and cooperation are

simultaneously combined (Bengtsson and Kock, 1999). Cooperation between competitors on a horizontal level tends to increase the effects of relationships (Park et al., 2014). Firms engage in cooperative relationships in order to gain market power, to improve innovation processes, to cope with global competition, to organize and secure supply chain relations (Bouncken et al., 2015; Li et al., 2011).

The adoption of a syncretic rent-seeking behavior through the combination of a high degree of competition and cooperation permits firms to benefit from the advantages of both relations (Lado et al., 1997). Coopetition arises when the relative position in the sector and the need for resources are important (Bengtsson and Kock, 1999). According to Bengtsson and Kock (2000, p. 2) coopetition is “the dyadic and paradoxical relationship that emerges when two firms cooperate in some activities, such as in a strategic alliance, and at the same time compete with each other in other activities”.

Although coopetition theory was mainly developed with a focus on dyadic relationships (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996; Bengtsson and Kock, 1999), coopetition among multiple competitors can also develop, and this form can be investigated as a relationship network. Thus, some scholars have introduced complex relationships among numerous partners in their studies on alliances, thereby covering several concepts such as, e.g., alliance constellation frameworks (Gomes-Casseres, 1996). In fact, between dyadic relations and multi-partner perspectives, coopetition definitions are numerous and broad. Dagnino and Padula (2002) highlight the possible involvement of numerous partners in a cooperative strategy. They consider the coopetition relationship between several partners to be complex, especially when the relationship concerns numerous activities along the value chain. Other studies have focused on cooperative relationships in networks between more than two partners. In this vein, Gnyawali et al. (2008) offer a framework for understanding coopetition by distinguishing vertical from horizontal relationships and temporal from spatial separation. The authors differentiate six situations, which are described in the following table.

Table 1: A framework for understanding coopetition

Locus of coopetition		Axis of coopetition	
		Vertical	Horizontal
Dyad (same firms)	Temporally and spatially collocated	Coopetition between players who are vertically adjacent to each other in the industry value chain and who compete and collaborate in the same domain	Coopetition between players who are rivals at the same stage in the industry value chain and who compete and collaborate in the same domains
	Temporally and spatially separated	Coopetition between players who are vertically adjacent to each other in the industry value chain and who compete in one domain and collaborate in another domain	Coopetition between players who are rivals at the same stage in the industry value chain and who compete in one domain and collaborate in another domain
Multiple firms		Coopetition between players who are vertically adjacent to each other in the industry value chain and who collaborate with each other in order to compete with rival pairs or groups	Coopetition between players who are rivals at the same stage in the industry value chain and who collaborate with each other in order to compete with rivals' pair or groups

Source: Gnyawali et al. (2008)

Moreover, the increase in the number of partners in, e.g., multiple firm situations enhances coopetition complexity (Dagnino and Padula, 2002; Gnyawali et al., 2008) and thus can lead to competition problems (Choi et al., 2010). Collective horizontal coopetition that includes more than two partners may induce the risk of copying core competencies or the appropriation of the manager's knowledge of the firm (Choi et al., 2010). These problems are often related to an increase of paradoxical coopetition tensions. Paradoxical tensions generally emerge in complex organizational situations, especially when firms must adapt to their environment (Smith and Lewis, 2011). These situations require not only collective management but also often implicate the ability of this management to evolve (Dana et al., 2013). According to Gnyawali et al. (2016), tensions play a central role in the coooperative paradox. By focusing on the development

of a conceptual framework addressing the implications of paradoxical tensions, Gnyawali et al. (2016) invite more empirical research to better understand how to manage them.

1.2. Managing paradoxical tensions in multiple firm cooperation

Traditionally, the strategic management literature and Western thought in general, which is based on Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction, oppose the combination of competition and cooperation. By joining these apparently opposite paradigms, cooperation appears to be a paradoxical relationship as per its definition (Bengtsson and Kock, 2014). For Cameron and Quinn (1988, p. 2), a paradox "involves contradictory, mutually exclusive elements that are present and operate equally at the same time".

According to Lewis (2000), a tension may arise from this paradox when the perspectives, feelings, messages, requests, identities, interests and/or practices are contradictory but related. Smith and Lewis (2011) also emphasize the simultaneity of contradictory elements leading to paradoxical tensions. They then suggest a typology of four main paradoxical tensions: belonging, learning, performing and organizing. According to the authors, these paradoxical tensions are both inherent to the organization as "latent" (due to organizational complexity and the need for environmental adaptation) and socially constructed as "salient".

As already underlined, Gnyawali et al. (2008) argue that cooperation leads to paradoxical tensions. This emphasis is in line with the findings of Child and Faulkner (1998) and Lewis et al. (2002), who argued that the concept of cooperation itself leads to tensions. Smith and Lewis (2011) also emphasize that some paradoxical tensions appear to arise during the implementation phase of the cooperative process. In addition, Seran et al. (2016), Gnyawali and Park (2009) and Chiambaretto et al. (2016) also underline that the origins of tensions may be found in cooperation strategies.

The tensions related to cooperation often stem from the threat that a competing partner will plunder resources and knowledge. In addition, this risk further increases when market leaders are cooperating (Gnyawali and Park, 2009). Gnyawali and Park (2009) argue that firms in cooperation must confront a dilemma: the appeal of opportunities from partnerships and the menace of appropriation of resources/knowledge by the partner. Thus, it is necessary for competing firms that cooperate to protect themselves or to work to overcome these risks in order to benefit from cooperation opportunities. According to Cassiman et al. (2009), competitors will try to gain more benefits from their collaboration than their partner. This danger may lead to a misinterpretation of the partner's actions that could generate unexpected

consequences (Chen, 2008). Gnyawali and Park (2009) explain that in this frame, managers will face high levels of tension due to the risk of knowledge loss or the strengthening of their cooperator. All in all, as suggested by Dana et al. (2013), management plays a crucial role in overcoming the paradoxical tensions created by cooperation. In this sense, in their study on the management of paradoxical tensions as related to information in cooperation, Fernandez and Chiambaretto (2016) suggest that the management of these tensions requires a combination of formal and informal control mechanisms.

To limit paradoxical tensions, some authors (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989; Loebecke et al., 1999) suggest a separation over time and/or space. Other scholars have also underlined the relevance of temporal or spatial sharing in the context of simultaneous competition and cooperation (Chen, 2008; Oliver, 2004; Clarke-Hill et al., 2003; Bengtsson and Kock, 2000). Recently, Bengtsson et al. (2016) showed that the more cooperative paradoxical tensions a manager experienced external to his firm, the more he would be able to perceive and manage the internal tensions due to cooperative paradoxes. The tension and complexity of cooperation suggest that firms would do better to focus first on competition for a period and then on cooperation (Gnyawali et al., 2008). According to Gnyawali and Park (2009), the dynamics of cooperation seem to depend on the firm's capability to manage tensions. This capability is important to understand how firms can manage its benefits and risks. The management of tensions is essential to maintain cooperative success (Walley, 2007; Gnyawali and Park, 2011). Similarly, Fernandez et al. (2014) argue that a mixed organization based on both the separation and the integration of competition and cooperation allows the management of tensions. Thus, different styles of competition and avoidance are important for this type of management (Tidström, 2014). Additionally, Fernandez et al. (2014) suggest a complex style for managing cooperative tensions. At the individual level, Raza-Ullah et al. (2014) include the maintenance of emotional ambivalence between positive and negative emotions in the management of cooperative tensions, and Yami and Nemeh (2014) identify the importance of social capital in reducing the negative effect of tensions.

However, even if the cooperative literature identifies and defines cooperative tensions, the numerous paradoxical tensions emerging in the cooperative context are not yet sufficiently investigated. Furthermore, because the multiplication of partners increases cooperative complexity (Dagnino and Padula, 2002; Gnyawali et al., 2008) and cooperative problems (Choi et al., 2010), we suggest investigating this cooperative context as the source of several paradoxical tensions.

2. Methodology

2.1. The in-depth case study method

Phenomenon complexity leads to a preference for an empirical investigation (Gnyawali and Park, 2009). The case study method is especially recommended to understand coopetition challenges (Bengtsson et al., 2010). The in-depth study appears to be appropriate for the paradoxical coopetition phenomenon (Gnyawali and Park, 2011). The lack of significant archival data in the wine industry, which is composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), leads to the adoption of a qualitative approach for practical reasons. The exploratory nature of the subject further supports this choice. Our research is based on an in-depth case study of the coopetition strategy among numerous competitors. We investigate the case of the competitive strategy of the Pic Saint-Loup wine union in the southern region of France.

The case study method is appropriate for the investigation of new or poorly understood phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984). Case studies appear to be apt for the study of competitive situations (Gnyawali and Park, 2011) that evolve over time (Langley, 1999). The coopetition process is complex and includes numerous actors with several social ties. Findings from these studies are more valid and generalizable than single firm analyses because they are deeply grounded in varied, empirical evidence (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1984).

The case study is defined by Yin (1984) as an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in the context of real life. Further, according to the author, multiple sources of data are incorporated into the case study, including primary data, such as interviews and observation, and secondary data, such as professional archives and articles. Gnyawali and Park (2009) suggest that future research should focus on interviews to highlight management modalities and the dynamics of coopetition. Case study research is an iterative process with multiple feedback loops. To ensure the findings' reliability, data collection is realized by triangulation (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Jick, 1979).

Bresser and Harl (1986) argue that timing is crucial when evaluating the characterization of collective relationships through collective strategies among competitors. According to Bengtsson et al. (2010), studying the development of the coopetition process is essential. Therefore, we opted to study the dynamic of the competitive process over time by interviewing the actors about this process. Our study occurs through interviews with respondents focused on their history with the union, which has been active for over twenty-five years, and through investigations in the research field over four years.

2.2. The field context

The French wine industry is a particularly dynamic environment with many firms involved in international competition. According to Anderson (2004), the globalization of the wine sector has resulted in the creation of large-scale players aiming to dominate global markets. The wine trade is currently experiencing exponentially growing globalization. In this new environment, wine clusters have expanded to dominate the market in new producer regions such as New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Argentina and California. Wine clusters explain the success of these New World countries (Spawton and Forbes, 1997). Porter (1998, p. 78) defines clusters as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field”. Porter and Bond (2004), studying the “Napa Valley” wine cluster in California, argue that clusters develop competition among member firms. Dana et al. (2013) show the importance of the cooperative relationship evolution in wine clusters.

It appears that cooperative strategies are widely used in the wine sector and may explain the success of clusters in New World countries. Cooperative strategies have developed in the French wine industry as well, for several reasons:

- Small family firms have needed to cooperate to survive, which has led to the adoption of several collective structures, such as winemaking cooperatives or unions;
- Aggressive new competitors and liberalized markets have emerged from globalization, which has made competition fiercer; and
- A high degree of industry institutionalization has further supported increased local cooperation.

Firms from New World countries have developed international brands by relying on concentration strategies to realize economies of scale. For others, improving the quality of wine has not been sufficient to overcome the crisis. Product differentiation might have previously been a competitive advantage in the industry, but marketing and distribution strategies have become the real drivers of success. To develop brands and differentiators, SMEs needed to organize collectively. Thereby, they have developed alliances or inter-organizational collaborations for growth (Anderson, 2004; Dana et al., 2013).

In this context, we investigated the Pic Saint-Loup wine union in southern France, an exemplary case of a successful cooperation strategy among several competitors that launched in the mid-eighties. Currently, the Pic Saint-Loup wine production zone is considered to produce among the highest premium products of the Languedoc-Roussillon wine industry. In Pic Saint-Loup,

forty-eight SMEs cooperate while the firms remain in direct competition. All Pic Saint-Loup union members are wineries in charge of transforming grapes and producing and selling wine. The case study involved meeting twenty-three of the forty-eight firms in the union.

2.3. The data collection and analysis

Our longitudinal data collection was intensive, extending over more than four years and including three stages of interviews and observation. Our historical approach, based on the memory of interviewees, covers the twenty-five years since the launch of the initial union cooperative strategy at the end of the eighties. We used several data sources at each stage:

Table 2: The method's steps

Data collection stages	First stage	Second stage	Third stage
Type	Unstructured interviews	Semi-structured interviews and site observation	Archival data analyze and observations
Number	16 interviews	23 interviews	2 days
Goals	Case study validation Network penetration Themes identification for guide construction	Primary data collection	Secondary data collection Data triangulation

2.3.1. Unstructured interviews stage

According to Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 365) “unstructured interviewing provides a greater breadth than the other types, given its qualitative nature”. Unstructured interviews are the key stage for success in qualitative investigations. Through discussions with key actors in the union and experts, the unstructured interviews allowed for:

- Validation of the fit of the case with the chosen theoretical perspective at the onset;
- Penetration of the owner-manager network of the case study; and
- Ultimately, validation of the results and managerial implications.

Unstructured interviews started with a simple question: “Can you talk about the cooperative relationships you have with your competitors?”. These interviews helped us to confirm the relevance of themes from the cooperative literature (collaboration, competition, and tensions management) and favored the appearance of “cooperative strategies multiplication” topics to build the interview guide. We extracted verbatims, coded data, and classified this data into the following categories: collaboration evolution in the union, competition evolution in the union, identification and evolution of tensions and risks, and cooperative strategies outside of the union. These 16 unstructured interviews concern a diversity of respondents. The first group contains key informants as the President, the two Vice-Presidents, owner-managers members of the PSL union, and the person in charge of managing the union. The second group is composed by outside PSL competitor, wine trade organization managers, and professional wine experts as researchers or journalists.

2.3.2. Semi-structured interviews stage

Interviews were our primary source of inductive data. The data were collected through twenty-three face to face semi-structured, in-depth interviews (see table 3) with the owner-managers of firms involved in the union. These interviews, recorded by a voice-recording device before being transcribed, lasted approximately 90 minutes and were systematically complemented by site visits, observations and informal dialogues. On average, we spent half a day with each respondent.

We used snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961), with the first respondents identifying others (Patton, 1990; Kuezl, 1992), to enable us to detect key participants with significant practical experience. This method permitted our slow introduction into the owner-manager network. All the PSL owner-managers interviewed during the first unstructured interviews stage were also interviewed during the second stage of semi-structured interviews.

This second stage of data collection permitted the identification of cooperative tensions. According to Cameron et Quinn (1988), paradoxical tensions appear by the simultaneous presence of contradictory elements in the discourse. We searched these types of contradictions as i.e. the formalization of entry barriers to enhance cooperation while integrating new members to maintain competition.

2.3.3. Archival data and observations stage

Archival data and observations expanded our understanding, offering insights that could reinforce our interview findings (Forster, 1994). The union archives were analyzed at the union office over several days. During the collection of these secondary data, informal interviews with the manager and the president of the union were conducted. Considerable information can come from informal interviewing in the field (Lofland, 1971). This stage of collection allows for many observations in the actual context of union life. Other observations were of collective actions organized by the union such as days of collective promotion, collective tastings, or collective showrooms during professional salons.

The diversity of respondents allowed for a mix of different points of view to describe a complex and dynamic phenomenon. This diversity enhanced the triangulation process for verification (Patton, 1990). The findings were transcribed and analyzed to extract manually coded segments (Miles and Huberman, 1994) with interview identification numbers. These segments were subjected to thematic content analysis.

3. An empirical illustration: the Pic Saint-Loup wine union

3.1. The rise of coopetition

The Pic Saint-Loup wineries were created in the eighties and immediately grouped to solve technical problems. The coooperative strategy was formalized at the end of the eighties, when the wineries decided to collectively differentiate their production zone. The wineries' owner-managers, representing fewer than ten winegrowers, launched a coooperative strategy of differentiation through reliance on "Pic Saint-Loup" area recognition. The French notion of "terroir" based on a geographical identification acts as a collective brand that federates firms in competition. Because they develop the same distribution network of wine shoppers and retailers, union members are in direct competition within their brands. The economic success of each firm involved with the coooperative strategy quickly attracted new union members.

The arrival of new members made direct coordination impossible and led to a need for formalization to federate the numerous coooperators. As a result, in 1988, a formal structure was created to develop a collective brand. By adopting a geographical label of distinction, a collective brand allows coooperators to continue selling their individual brands. The geographical label is not the goal but instead serves as a means of differentiation and a means for developing the coooperative strategy. An SME manager explained that "they were inevitably forced to

federate and bring out a collective brand in order to gain market share”. Another argued that “the Pic Saint-Loup structure permit to create a collective protection to act individually”.

By creating a formal professional union that relies on an associative organization, the coopetitors were able to federate their collective actions. They created a democratic governance structure, with democratic elections of an association board that then elects a president. Annually, all union members are assembled for a general meeting of members. The Pic Saint-Loup wine union tends to develop a collective brand by federating individual firms that support their commercialization of the individual brands. Despite the geographical identification of the collective brand, regional institutions and professional organizations do not lead the coopetitive strategy. Thereby, the Pic Saint-Loup strategy operates as an emergent coopetitive process: “even if regional federation help us to technically build our structure, the Pic Saint-Loup strategy emerge from winegrowers”.

The increase in the number of members in the beginning of the nineties opened the door to the risk of opportunism. Opportunistic new members could benefit from collective efforts by not respecting the qualitative aspect of production and distribution. The risk lay in the adoption of an individual volume strategy by a new member, who might be able to successfully flood the market with cheap wine based on the reputation of quality created through the coopetitive strategy. In consequence, the reputation for quality in the production zone, which comprises the main strategic resource of the coopetitive strategy, could be in danger. According to a respondent: “For a long time we managed to maintain the strategy because there weren't many of us, there were ten of us. The risk is that new members will adopt more behavior to win in the short term.”

3.2. The rise of tensions

There is a risk of producing low-quality wines that profit from the geographic label to increase their selling price. To liquidate lower quality stocks, some members may sell to a wholesaler, which would profit from the geographic label to sell the wine to mass-market retailers. Consequently, bottles labeled “Pic Saint-Loup” may be found at lower prices under wholesaler brands in supermarkets. This phenomenon is contrary to the quality spirit of the area and thus creates tensions and destabilizes the coopetition strategy. These tensions are lived inside collective meetings by publicly denouncing these opportunist behaviors. Thus, one respondent argued that “the danger comes from actors with opportunist behavior who do not have the same purposes and objectives as the collective in the long term”. Another respondent precised that

“supermarkets distribution is dangerous for the Pic Saint-Loup differentiation strategy”. The goal of formalizing relationships is to control these opportunist behaviors.

The push to maintain quality led the cooepititors to build barriers to entry by adopting a decree of production standards. This decree requires members to strictly adopt the same qualitative norms of production, including limits on production volume and a restricted number of grape varieties that can be used and that must be blended. A tasting committee elected by PSL members controls the quality of the wines and has the power to refuse their introduction under the label’s name. The decree also limits the geographic area of production. Finally, all new members must wait six years before obtaining the right to use the collective brand. According to a respondent: “The rules act as natural selection. By engaging production during several years to obtain PSL agreement, new members necessarily commit to the long term.” A six-year waiting process before admission of new members strengthens control over them. The tasting committee is able to block the PSL recognition of members with behaviors considered as opportunist. Unfortunately, the new geographic area of production led to the exclusion of part of the vineyards of some members of the production area. This situation created tensions leading to cooepitive strategies of some members outside the PSL group.

The reinforcement of formalization, with the need to manage the decree and to federate cooepititors, allowed the union to collect a membership fee and employ a remunerated manager. This cooepitive manager is in charge of several actions and cooperative relationships, both inside and outside the union:

- Federating the members around the cooepitive actions;
- Ensuring respect for the collective norms of the production decree;
- Organizing collective meetings between cooepititors and training;
- Promoting the Pic Saint-Loup wine area; and
- Reinforcing ties with regional institutions and professional organizations.

The increasing formalization and the existence of a manager contributed to increased cooperation between members while avoiding internal competition in the union. To address the increasing number of union members, starting from eight at its creation to forty-eight in 2008, the union established several specialized commissions of work. This allowed all union members to be involved in collective actions beyond the use of a collective brand by participating in these specialized commissions. The commissions enhanced collective actions and promoted cooperation to the detriment of competition. Stifling competition between cooepititors may be risky for the longevity of the cooepitive strategy. To maintain this important degree of competition, the union was open to integrating new members and allowed for individual

competitive actions. One respondent summarized by stating: “The union permits the coordination of individual strategies in a coherent collective strategy... that’s a big deal.” Another owner manager expressed clearly the tension: “Individualism is necessary to perform while being united is necessary for the future”. Another said: “Fortunately, there is competition between us; otherwise, we would not move forward anymore”.

The formalization of entry barriers enhances cooperation between members and the success of a cooperative strategy. However, a negative effect appeared with the evolution of the global wine market. The consumption of grape varieties without blending, more white or pink wines, and the number of less complex combinations increased gradually. The production norms of the union narrowed the individual flexibility of its members, preventing them from quickly adapting their production to meet global market trends. After its initial success, the cooperative strategy created an enclosing effect that stifled the individual flexibility of the members. This enclosing effect could be fatal to individual capacities and tends to create only a cooperative space. The pendulum between individual flexibility and collective protection creates an important tension in the competition process. An union member said, that “while the union permits the identification of individual brands in a collective terroir, the same union stifles my individual adaptation to markets with white or pink wine using several grape varieties”. Consequently, members try to obtain flexibility by adhering or creating new competitive strategies. The multiplication of competitive strategies appears as an answer to internal tensions.

3.3. The multiplication of cooperative strategies

Overcoming the enclosing effect, as a positive effect of competition, becomes essential to benefit from competition strategies over time. Without leaving the cooperative strategy, the members of the Pic Saint-Loup union began other peripheral cooperative strategies. Except for two new members launching individual initiatives, all the respondents joined at least one peripheral cooperative strategy and even assumed central functions within them. As of the time of the study, the two new members were not yet official Pic Saint-Loup producers because they were still in the six-year waiting period in accordance with the union decree.

Table 3 lists the 23 interviewed members, indicating the legal status and size of their firm (expressed in number of employees). It highlights the number of cooperative peripheral strategies in which each member is involved and the number of working days per month granted to them. Finally, this table makes it possible to identify the different members’ positions within these peripheral strategies.

Table 3: Peripheral cooperative strategies involving members of the union

Members	Type	Size	Number of peripheral cooperative strategies	Days by month	Position within
A	IW*	8,5	2	1	President
B	IW	9	1	0	Member
C	IW	5	1	0	Member
D	IW	5	1	0	Member
E	IW	10	1	10	President
F	IW	2	1	0	Member
G	IW	2	2	0	Member
H	IW	9	4	2	Vice-president
I	IW	2	2	0,5	Member
J	IW	3	1	0	Member
K	IW	2	6	0	Member
L	IW	3,5	1	0,5	Administrator
M	IW	2	4	0	Member
N	IW	4	2	2	Member
O	IW	5	2	4	Administrator
P	CW**	10	5	0,5	Member
Q	CW	8	5	2	Member
R	CW	17	1	0	Member
S	IW	1	0	0	Member
T	IW	1	2	0	Member
U	IW	2	0	0	Member
V	IW	2	1	0,5	Member
W	IW	1	1	0	Member

*Independent Winemaking **Cooperative Winemaking

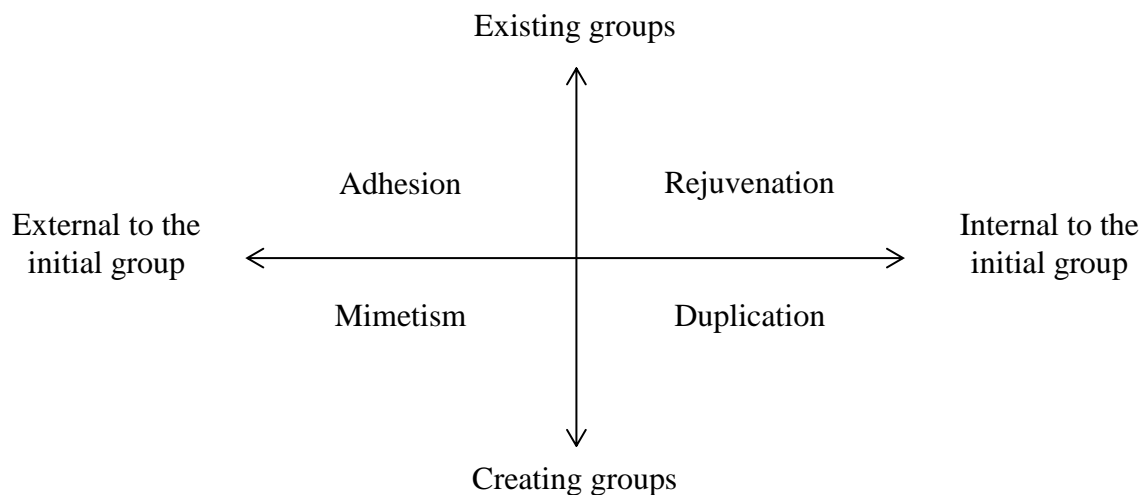
These peripheral cooperative strategies took diverse forms by involving only one or several members of the union, sometimes including competitors outside the union and far from the geographic area of Pic Saint-Loup. Beyond the initial cooperative strategy, our study identified forty-six additional agreements, yielding an average of two memberships per firm. The

importance of this phenomenon can be measured by the active participation of the owner-managers in the elaboration of some of these cooperative strategies and by their willingness to fill important positions at the collective level.

On average, the owner-managers of the Pic Saint-Loup wineries dedicated two-and-a-half days per month to managing peripheral cooperative strategies. This tendency towards the development of cooperation is inevitable because, according to one of the interviewed owner-managers, French winemakers are too small to compete on their own. Thus, firms tend to overcome the limits of individual action created by the barriers to entry established by the collective structure. They sought trade opportunities outside of the initial cooperative group of Pic Saint-Loup. The proliferation of cooperative strategies was implemented in four ways (figure 1):

- Those that were led by the initial group members of Pic Saint-Loup and those that were led by external competitors;
- Those that were led by an existing group of competitors and those that generated the creation of a new competitor group.

Figure 1: Peripheral cooperative strategies



“Adhesion” – this external cooperative strategy consists of adhering to an existing cooperative strategy initiated and formalized by actors external to the original group. This strategy allows, for example, the use of a collective brand other than just the geographic area. In France, diverse structures for cooperation among competitors occur in several protected denominations of origin such as the qualitative denomination “AOP” (Protected Appellation of Origin). Other forms of labeling are also based on geographic location as an ‘IG’ (Geographic Indication). These structures also allow one to take steps towards obtaining an organic certification and a

label such as “AB” (Biologic Agriculture). Becoming a member of an external cooperative strategy permits the firm to directly benefit from specialized distribution channels by adapting to new norms of production. According to one respondent: “We have customers whose top priority is not to have a Pic Saint-Loup wine but organic wine. The ‘AB’ label is important. We therefore adhere to the ‘AB’ label even if it puts us in competition with other wineries”. 21 of the interviewed members adhere to an existing external group. Customers have the choice among these collective brands, which places them in competition with each other. The “adhesion” strategy is common in the wine sector especially in Europe because the wine industry structuration is based on the recognition of multiple terroirs. Most of time, collective brands cooperate through their boards to structure a coherent market positioning.

“Mimetism” – this external cooperative strategy involves members of the union working with actors outside of the initial group of competitors in a cooperative process similar to the original cooperative process. Mimetism creates a collective structure that borrows concepts from other groups. For instance, it can be initiated with regional firms, such as the club “Vignobles et signatures,” to promote the best winegrower in each production zone of the Languedoc-Roussillon region or with other firms outside of the region. By participating in the creation of an external cooperative strategy, the competitor can develop other distribution channels for its existing production. As one respondent mentioned “we learn from the collective and we can duplicate with other competitors outside Pic Saint-Loup to offer a complementary range to distributors.” Because they are directly in competition with the initial group, only few members are involved in “mimetism” strategies.

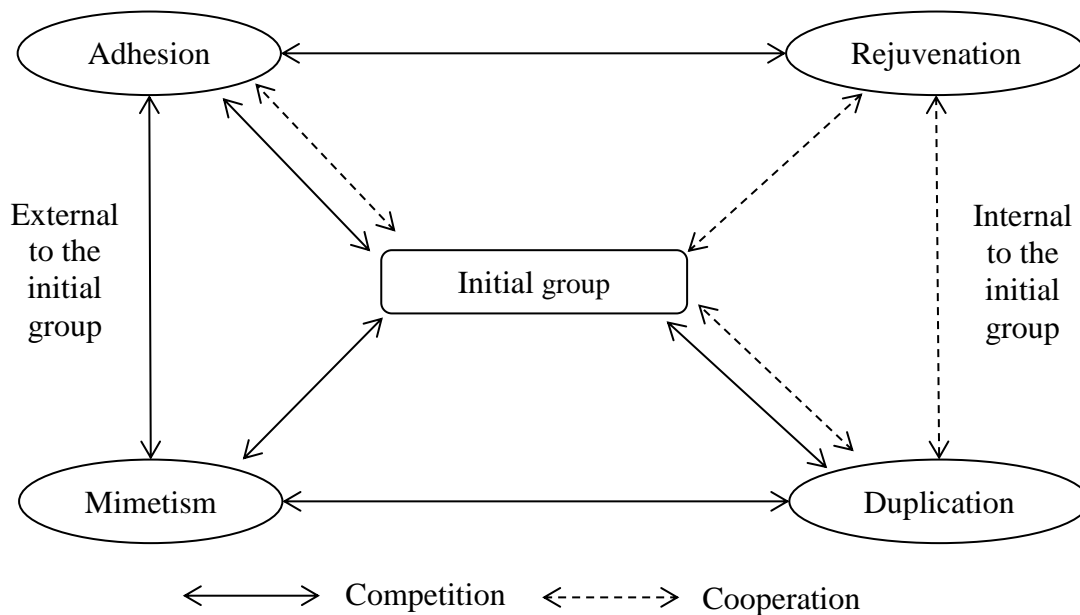
“Rejuvenation” – this internal cooperative strategy concerns all or some members of the existing group and reproduces the initial cooperative strategy within a new project and another collective structure. In our case, this concerned the remobilization by some members of an old wine union “Vins de pays du Val de Montferrand” to produce new wines with this distinct collective brand. According to a respondent “Val de Montferrand is the possibility for union members to compete with big firms without changing the Pic Saint-Loup strategy”. The president of Val de Montferrand’s union précised that: “the Val de Montferrand union is composed exclusively by Pic Saint-Loup members interested in developing new products as white wine. We try to duplicate the same organization”. This type of peripheral cooperative strategy allows competitors to benefit from the attractiveness of the global wine market for wine grape varieties without jeopardizing the initial cooperative strategy. Moreover, some members of the Pic Saint-Loup union also had ambitions to become affiliated with a brand associated with a higher level of quality; this spurred another internal rejuvenation cooperative strategy that is currently in

process, which aims to distinguish the higher quality wines of Pic Saint-Loup. These strategies concern all Cooperative Winemakers: their size and large grape variety leads them to developed new market opportunities. Only few Independent Winemakers are engaged in rejuvenation strategy to explore new opportunities. These members have in common a direct sale policy in their cellars and cooperate with the initial group in order to develop a complementary range that is not in competition with PSL wines. However, this complementary range directly competes with existing adhesion strategies.

“Duplication” – this internal coepetitive strategy engages all or some of the existing group members in creating a coepetitive strategy. Pursuing goals different from those in the initial coepetitive strategy, this new coepetitive strategy takes a form external to the union. An ad hoc collective structure or an informal organization is often created to carry out this strategy, which may consist of managing specific promotional actions or sharing human resources and materials. The main examples of this type of strategy are the creation of an “employers group” that shares human resources or a group that shares agricultural materials, including expensive winegrowing equipment such as tractors. Developing internal coepetitive strategies permits collective projects with coepetitors outside of the original coepetitive strategy organization and permits members to maintain their own relationships with other members to compete. One respondent affirmed: “With two winemakers we created a cooperative to share agricultural equipment and an employee. We also share about the way we work and how we maintain the wines. In this way, we give ourselves ideas and this creates a kind of positive stimulation”. The duplication strategy is common in wine regions that have developed cooperative winemaking and, by consequence, a culture of mutualization among competitors. 9 of the interviewed members adhere to a duplication strategy by cooperating with other PSL members or PSL cooperative winemaking members. Some of these duplication strategies are ran with winemaking structures outside the initial group thus blending a complex network of both competition and cooperation relations.

The implications of SMEs existing in a complex whole of coepetition strategies give us insights into the relationships developed between the groups:

Figure 2: Group relationships



External groups are in competition with all the groups. The members of the initial group are collaborating together. Because of their diversity, the membership and duplication strategies generate a complex set of relationships blending competition, cooperation, and co-competition or an absence of links.

4. Discussion of findings

4.1. The paradoxical tensions of co-competition over time

This case allowed us to identify the emergence of paradoxical tensions over time that lead to the need for formalization. It confirmed that multi-competitor co-competitive strategies exist and lead to tensions that are important to overcome (Dagnino and Padula, 2002; Gnyawali et al. 2008; Choi et al., 2010). Five paradoxical tensions, their drivers, and their management modalities were gradually identified (Table 4).

Table 4: The evolution of cooperative tensions

Tension drivers	Paradoxical Tensions	Paradox Literature	Tension Management
Getting into co-competition	Between individual autonomy and collective dependence	Smith and Lewis (2011), tensions between individual autonomy and collective dependency	Pursue competitive relation outside the cooperative strategy
Increasing the number of competitors	Between informal and formal relationships	Murnighan and Conlon (1991), tensions between collaboration and competition	Formalization to federate numerous competitors
Arrival of new members	Between opportunistic and altruistic behaviors		Construction of barriers-to-entry
Formalization	Between competition and cooperation		Integration of new members
Barriers to entry	Between individual flexibility and collective protection	Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009), tensions between building capabilities for the future while ensuring success in the present	Temporal or spatial sharing (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Gnyawali et al., 2008)

First, to engage in co-competition, every competitor must make an initial choice between pursuing individual autonomy or joining a collective strategy, which leads to dependency. This choice represents the first type of tension. Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 383) call these “belonging tensions”, as they consist of selecting either individual autonomy or collective dependency. In our case, the choice consisted of maintaining individual competition outside of the collective frame.

Each step of the co-competition process leads to important tensions that competitors need to overcome. The structuration of the organization enhances tensions between collaboration and competition (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991), which evolve over time. The arrival of new competitors leads to the appearance of opportunistic behaviors, which prevents informal relationships and obliges the union to enhance formalization and gradually reinforce barriers to

entry. We extend the work of Mariani (2016), saying that various formal coordination mechanisms play a crucial role in managing multi-party cooperation but that contractualization is not necessary. A short-term vision stimulates opportunistic behaviors that could be counterbalanced by the strategic search for flexibility and control (De Rond and Bouchikhi, 2004). To maintain a certain degree of competition-stifling through an increase in cooperation, new members integrate into the union. Though building barriers to entry can enhance cooperation between members, it can also stifle types of competition that may be important for cooperation success (Dana et al., 2013). Barriers to entry lead to a paradoxical tension between individual flexibility and collective protection. They build a negative enclosing effect that contributes to the loss of individual flexibility and the ability to strategically adapt. Overcoming this main limitation of collective strategies (Bresser and Harl, 1986) is crucial to understand the key success factors of cooperation and its longevity.

This case reveals an enclosing effect that appeared to be the most important tension of the cooperative strategy. This enclosing effect could be fatal to individual capacities, as it creates only a cooperative space, which could present a threat to collective capacities. The cooperators must manage the tension between individual flexibility and collective protection. According to Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009), firms use a mix of integration and differentiation tactics to manage paradoxes. Accordingly, they must choose between profiting from future market evolution and protecting the present state.

This case offers empirical insight into ways to overcome paradoxical tensions and to implement this temporal choice. The cooperation literature underlines the relevance of temporal and/or spatial sharing (Gnyawali et al., 2008; Chen, 2008; Oliver, 2004; Clarke-Hill et al., 2003; Bengtsson and Kock, 2000). Cooperation strategies are unstable by nature (Das and Teng, 2000); temporal sharing leads to skepticism about the cooperation strategy's longevity. This case reveals a way to stabilize the cooperation strategy and to expand beyond the tensions by maintaining current protections while profiting from external evolution.

4.2. The multiplication process to overcome tensions

The case study shows a multiplication process that firms engage in to overcome the main tensions of cooperation. This process allows the simultaneous continuity of competitive and collaborative relationships. In this way, the Pic Saint-Loup members cooperated with external competitors or developed peripheral cooperative projects with internal cooperators. Looking forward, it appears that the cooperation strategy has stabilized in the short term and will benefit

in the long term from its competitive advantage. Using Gnyawali et al.'s (2008) framework to understand coopetition, the multiplication of cooperative strategies brings a third locus of coopetition, which we could call 'multiple group coopetition'. Our case contributes to the investigation of the horizontal axis of coopetition. In addition, we propose the following definition of multiple group horizontal coopetition: "coopetition between groups who are rivals at the same stage in the industry value chain and who collaborate with each other in order to compete with rival groups".

Similar to how Peng and Bourne (2009) found the coexistence of competition and cooperation at the network level, we found this coexistence at the multiple group level. Overcoming the dyadic and network perspectives, the study of numerous groups highlights the existence of diverse relationships including both coopetition and no relationship between the groups. By interweaving two levels of analysis – multiple firms and multiple group levels – a firm can simultaneously find itself in a situation of collaboration at one level while pursuing competition at another level. At a multiple group level, some members may be in competition with their initial cooperative group. While more partners lead to more complex relations (Dagnino and Padula, 2002), the tension and complexity created by coopetition (Gnyawali et al., 2008; Oliver, 2004; Bengtsson and Kock, 2000) appear to increase with the multiplication of competitors and levels of analysis. First, the tensions increase with the number of competitors. Second, the complexity increases with the multiplication of cooperative groups. The complexity and tensions concern the management of different rules or norms, the coherence of product or brand positioning, and the development of strong competition between competitors or distribution channels. If cooperative strategies are not without risk (Gnyawali and Park, 2009) to begin with, these new tensions lead to several different new risks.

4.3. The management of paradoxical tensions

Gnyawali and Park (2009) introduced the idea that the risk of coopetition leads to tensions. Further, they opposed risks to opportunities. Opportunities are consequences of tensions. This case tends to confirm that the management of paradoxical tensions allows risks to be reduced while favoring the creation of opportunities. In our case, these opportunities induced the creation of numerous peripheral cooperative strategies.

Formulated in another way, engaging in peripheral cooperative strategies is the result of risk avoidance and offers opportunities for competitors. Our case underlines that peripheral coopetition strategies could be developed to overcome the risks of competition such as, i.e., the

enclosing effect. They could also be developed to take advantage of cooperative opportunities such as benefiting directly from specialized distribution channels (adhesion), developing other distribution channels (mimetism), profiting from new market demands without destabilizing the initial cooperative strategy (rejuvenation) or developing collective projects with competitors and maintaining their own relationships to compete (duplication).

Our long-term analysis allows us to identify tensions that appear successively. These paradoxical tensions led us to identify managerial levers that help to overcome these risks (Table 3). The management of a tension often leads to the creation of a new one, which in turn also needs to be resolved. Far from restraining the competition process, paradoxical tensions may actually support it. Similar to the work of Smith and Lewis (2011) on paradoxical tensions at an inter-organizational level, our research underlines that the management of these tensions ensures the long-term survival of cooperative strategies. Subsequently, paradoxical tension management allows for further opportunities linked to competition over a long period.

This case reveals a process in a multiple firm relationship context. This phenomenon leads to complexity (Dagnino and Padula 2002) and cooperative strategy multiplication (Gnyawali et al. 2008) and results in tensions. Moreover, tension management allows competitors to seize opportunities; the increase in cooperative tensions also leads to a multiplication of opportunities, as long as the competitors are able to manage them. This case shows that competitors copy existing cooperative strategies and that the management of tensions is related to the copied strategy.

From a collective point of view, accepting paradoxical tensions as potential sources for opportunities is followed by an increase in cooperative strategies that permit the evolution and thus the survival of the initial cooperative strategy. From an individual point of view, the acceptance of any paradoxical tensions that may appear and their management lead to the development of capacities that simultaneously permit the exploitation of existing opportunities and the exploration of new ones.

Conclusions

First, the Pic Saint-Loup case study confirmed that multiple firm cooperative relationships evolve. The long-term approach we used showed the evolution from a cooperative strategy between competitors to a strategy of cooperative portfolio management. The paradoxical tensions framework allows the identification of several tensions over time in this cooperative context. The longitudinal character of this study allows us to affirm that paradoxical tensions

emerge from a cooperative context. More generally, paradoxes are identified as sources of cooperative tensions.

In this study, we found the coexistence of competition, collaboration and cooperation relationships at a multiple group level. This confirmed that cooperation evolves and leads competitors to overcome important risks. Risks appear to first be caused by the increase of members and second, by the formalization of the cooperative strategy. Then, the barriers to entry create an important tension that leads to the need to develop peripheral cooperative strategies. Thus, firms combine several cooperative strategies that are involved in several levels of analysis at the multiple group level. At this stage, tensions and complexity increase, leading to the emergent risk of a lack of coherence and to the weakening of the initial cooperative strategy.

The first result of this study concerns the multiplication of cooperative strategies, as past research does not, in our opinion, provide theoretical or empirical contributions on this point. The case study shows that despite the instability of cooperative strategies and the need for alternating or spatially sharing, a cooperative strategy could be stabilized over time as long as competitors find flexibility outside of it. Through the multiplication of cooperative strategies, competitive and collaborative relationships can evolve without interruption and can help to maintain the advantages related to cooperative strategy over the long term. Despite internal collaborative enhancement, competition is necessary and expresses itself outside of the initial cooperative strategy by encouraging peripheral cooperative strategies. This case confirms that cooperation's evolution process leads to emergent risks and tensions that competitors must overcome. Highly complex relationships may arise when multiplying cooperative strategies, and these also require highly complex management. No known past research identifies this phenomenon, which could explain the longevity of cooperation. Our findings contribute to the development of Gnyawali et al.'s (2008) framework by identifying a third locus of cooperation that we could name the "multiple group level". However, our findings only contribute to investigations on the horizontal axis of cooperation. The multiple group level leads to questions about the competitor's capacity to manage a complex portfolio of cooperative strategies.

The second result of this study concerns the management of cooperative paradoxical tensions. The Pic Saint-Loup case study shows that the management of these types of tensions leads to benefits from further cooperative opportunities. The evolution of a cooperative strategy depends on the evolution of the paradoxical tensions. Thus, to benefit from other opportunities and to overcome cooperative tensions, competitors voluntarily duplicate existing cooperation strategies and their related tension management modalities.

From a practitioner's perspective, the Pic Saint-Loup case identifies emerging managerial limits throughout the evolution of the cooperative process and shows ways to overcome each of them. It identifies a set of cooperative strategies, indicating the tensions and the risks arising from each, and thus helps managers to choose which to engage in. Overcoming the main limits of competition is crucial to understand the key factors of cooperative success. This work allows us to recommend the pursuit of cooperation over time to sustainably benefit from the initial cooperative strategy advantages while encouraging managers to seek external flexibility. We argue that the multiplication of cooperative strategies seems inevitable in a wine sector with many small structures with limited resources in competition. Understanding the nature and complementarity of these strategies allow winemakers to obtain market adaptation by overcoming limiting tensions. Each cooperative strategy could be developed and managed as a cooperative portfolio with regard to specific objectives.

These results support the pursuit of empirical and dynamic analyses of cooperative's evolution. We argue that an in-depth longitudinal case study is particularly adapted to analyze this complex phenomenon. Moreover, SMEs with limited resources must especially focus on the complementary benefits of participating in multiple firm or group cooperation. Future research focusing on the horizontal axis of cooperation at a multiple group level is still needed.

Our research presents some limitations, as it focuses on one case study in the wine industry. For further research, we propose a stronger focus on the "New World" perspective to include a comparative analysis. These new producing countries are led by industrial wineries focusing more on customers than production. A second limitation takes place in the choice of this sector of wine. Indeed, the wine sector could be considered as a traditional industry. Future research could investigate other industries as i.e. "high-tech" to determine if similar findings could be obtained. New contexts or sectors could lead to reveal other cooperative tensions in terms of nature and intensity.

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