

Re-Embedding of Agricultural Activity and Transformations in Modes of Regulation: Theoretical Approaches and the Role of Rural Organizations

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Abstract:

This article examines the relationship between the re-embedding of agricultural activity and transformations in modes of regulation, with particular emphasis on the role of rural organizations. Drawing on a review of recent literature, it explores the conditions under which collective action can contribute to redefining the rules governing agricultural activities. The studies reviewed indicate that resource pooling, mutual assistance, collective learning, and territorial cooperation can strengthen farmers' capacity to act without necessarily increasing their participation in decision-making processes. In other words, the article highlights that changes occurring within organizations do not systematically lead to a reconfiguration of territorial dynamics. Such transformations remain contingent upon interactions among stakeholders, collective negotiation processes, established forms of coordination, and the institutional recognition of the initiatives undertaken.

Keywords: Economic re-embedding; Agricultural activity; Rural organizations; Collective action; Agricultural regulation; Collective capacities; Morocco.

1. Introduction

Agricultural activity plays a significant role in the economic and social life of rural territories. Beyond the production and marketing of food products, it involves natural resources, practical knowledge, labor relations, and forms of cooperation that contribute to the organization of rural communities. Farmers' decisions are therefore not based solely on prices, costs, or profitability prospects. They are also embedded in social relationships and institutional frameworks that influence access to resources, opportunities for coordination, and the conditions under which agricultural activities are carried out.

However, these different dimensions do not necessarily interact in a balanced manner. Market requirements, financial constraints, and transformations in production systems can reshape relationships among farmers and the conditions under which decisions are made. Difficulties in accessing equipment, knowledge, financing, and markets may also restrict opportunities for individual action. In this context, rural organizations, particularly cooperatives and associations, emerge as forms of collective action capable of addressing some of these constraints by pooling resources and organizing cooperation among stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the significance of these organizations extends beyond the services they provide to their members. They can also serve as spaces in which farmers express their needs, discuss economic priorities, and establish relationships with other territorial stakeholders. This dimension raises questions about their capacity to participate in defining the rules governing agricultural activity. The concept of re-embedding provides a framework for addressing this issue by situating economic activity within the social, territorial, and institutional relationships that shape its organization.

Accordingly, this article addresses the following research question: How can rural organizations contribute to the re-embedding of agricultural activity and the transformation of the rules governing economic decision-making?

The objective is to examine the mechanisms through which collective initiatives can influence the definition of agricultural objectives and priorities.

The article is structured into four sections. The first section revisits the theoretical foundations of embeddedness and defines the concept of re-embedding in relation to agricultural activity. The second examines the theoretical approaches that help explain the relationships between collective action and economic regulation. The third focuses on the resources, capacities, and forms of cooperation developed by rural organizations. Finally, the fourth section explores the mechanisms through which these practices may lead to transformations in internal, commercial, territorial, and institutional rules.

2. Embeddedness and Re-embedding of Agricultural Activity

Analyzing the relationships between agricultural activity and forms of collective organization requires moving beyond a conception of the economy limited to market mechanisms and individual decision-making. Indeed, the production and distribution of resources take place within social and territorial contexts that help shape farmers' opportunities for action. From this perspective, the concept of embeddedness provides a theoretical framework for understanding how economic activity is situated within society, while the notion of re-embedding raises questions about the possibilities of transforming the rules that govern economic practices.

The foundations of this approach are primarily associated with the work of Karl Polanyi, whose substantive conception of the economy challenges its reduction to the functioning of market mechanisms alone. Building on this perspective, Degavre and Lemaître (2008) emphasize the distinction between formal and substantive conceptions of economic activity. The former focuses on the choices made by individuals faced with scarce resources and alternative uses. The latter views the economy as a process through which human beings secure the material conditions of their existence through their relationships with nature and other members of society. This conception does not deny the relevance of economic calculations but rather situates them within the social relationships that contribute to the organization of economic activities.

Building on this distinction, Polanyi identifies several principles of economic integration, notably market exchange, redistribution, reciprocity, and householding. As Servet (2007) points out, these forms of integration can coexist and interact within the same society, or even within a single organization, depending on the institutional arrangements governing economic activities.

This plurality is further reflected in the plural economy approach developed by Laville (2001), which emphasizes that economic activities may combine market-based resources, redistributive mechanisms, and commitments grounded in reciprocity. In the agricultural sector, a cooperative may therefore market its

products, benefit from public support, and mobilize contributions from its members. However, the coexistence of these different forms of economic integration does not, in itself, determine how organizations operate. The central issue is to understand how these various resources are combined and to what extent farmers can participate in decisions concerning their allocation and use. Thus, the presence of multiple forms of economic coordination does not necessarily guarantee solidarity-based or democratic organizational practices.

This distinction highlights the need to differentiate the social embeddedness of economic activity from the objectives actually pursued by the actors involved. In this regard, Ould-Ahmed (2010) emphasizes that the existence of social or economic ties is not sufficient to characterize a deliberately constructed solidarity-based project. Accordingly, embeddedness should not be regarded as an inherently beneficial condition for the actors concerned. Rather, it provides an analytical perspective for examining the relationships that structure economic activity while also questioning the extent to which participants have the capacity to discuss, negotiate, and influence the rules governing it.

This perspective is particularly relevant to the analysis of agriculture, as productive activities remain closely intertwined with family relationships and cooperation networks. Indeed, the organization of agricultural work often relies on a combination of individual, family, and collective contributions. The exchange of services, sharing of equipment, and mutual assistance practices can facilitate agricultural activities by enabling farmers to mobilize resources that would otherwise be difficult to access individually. In this regard, Sabourin's (2007) research on farmers' organizations in Brazil highlights the importance of reciprocity in shaping cooperative relationships and commitments among producers. However, these practices do not necessarily involve an equitable distribution of responsibilities and benefits. Their analysis therefore requires particular attention to the conditions of participation and the recognition of individual and collective contributions.

Beyond these social relationships, agricultural activity is embedded in territories characterized by specific resources. Colletis et al. (2005) demonstrate that territorial resources can emerge from collective processes of coordination and resource valorization. Similarly, Pecqueur and Itçaina (2012) emphasize the need to distinguish between the local presence of an organization and its effective participation in territorial dynamics. This perspective suggests that resources acquire economic and collective significance through relationships among stakeholders, rules governing their use, and collective projects that structure their mobilization.

In the agricultural sector, such processes may involve, in particular, the valorization of local products or the use of shared equipment. However, the existence of territorial resources does not necessarily imply that the resulting benefits are distributed equitably among stakeholders. Territorial embeddedness must therefore be examined not only in terms of the cooperative relationships it fosters but also through the rules governing access to resources and the distribution of resulting benefits. This distinction makes it possible to move beyond the assumption that territories inherently foster solidarity and instead conceptualize them as systems of relationships whose outcomes depend on the collective arrangements established among stakeholders.

Recent research further extends this perspective by placing particular emphasis on the relationships between agricultural practices and their territorial environment. Duarte et al. (2025) highlight the importance of examining agri-food systems through the social and territorial relationships that shape their organization. In the Moroccan context, Amessaghrou et al. (2026) investigate the relationships between

territorial embeddedness, agroecological practices, and technological dependencies in the mountain agricultural systems of the Middle Atlas. Taken together, these contributions suggest that production decisions are shaped not only by local resources but also by knowledge, technical constraints, and relationships with external stakeholders. However, the use of territorial resources or the preservation of locally embedded agricultural practices does not, in itself, demonstrate a transformation of economic rules. Such an assessment also requires examining the conditions under which farmers can participate in decisions concerning the organization and management of the resources mobilized.

In addition to these social and territorial dimensions, institutional frameworks play a significant role in shaping access to resources. Rules governing land, water, financing, and support mechanisms may facilitate certain collective initiatives while also imposing constraints associated with eligibility criteria. Consequently, the formal recognition of a right or the existence of a support program does not necessarily guarantee effective access for all farmers.

In the Moroccan context, El Bilali et al. (2012) have drawn attention to issues of governance and coordination among stakeholders involved in agricultural and rural development. More recently, Zein Taleb et al. (2024), drawing on a study conducted in the Todgha Ferkla oases, highlight the role of public support mechanisms and local leadership in shaping collective action. Considered together, these contributions underscore the importance of institutional relationships in the development and functioning of rural organizations.

Given that agricultural activities are already embedded in social and institutional relationships, re-embedding can be understood as a process of transforming the ways in which actors define the objectives of their activities, organize the use of resources, and participate in economic decision-making. This perspective is further developed by Cary and Laville (2015), who emphasize both the economic and political dimensions of solidarity-based initiatives. Their approach suggests that the distinctive nature of these initiatives lies not only in their legal status but also in the opportunities they provide for stakeholders to discuss economic objectives and participate in shaping collective orientations.

Applied to agriculture, this perspective suggests that decisions concerning production, investment, natural resource use, and market outlets may reflect several concerns simultaneously. Income generation, the continuity of agricultural activities, resource preservation, and the satisfaction of territorial needs may all influence the definition of strategic priorities. The central question of re-embedding is therefore to examine the conditions under which these concerns can be collectively discussed and effectively influence decision-making processes.

The work of Ament et al. (2022), focusing on embeddedness in agriculture, provides further insights into this distinction by emphasizing that actors' motivations should not be inferred solely from their participation in market activities. An organization may expand its commercial activities while maintaining collective commitments, whereas non-market practices may remain structured by power relations that restrict opportunities for participation.

Recent research on the transformation of agri-food systems extends this discussion by highlighting the role of social innovation and collective practices. Drawing on a study of several initiatives across Europe and North Africa, Elsner et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of cooperation, resource sharing, and collective knowledge production in processes of agri-food transformation. Nevertheless, the transformative potential of an innovative initiative depends on the extent to which participants are able to influence the definition of collective priorities and strategic orientations.

This issue also resonates with the findings of Liu et al. (2025), who examine the factors associated with the vertical integration of agricultural cooperatives in China. Their contribution suggests that the expansion of organizational activities and economic relationships is also influenced by organizational characteristics and institutional support mechanisms. However, the diversification or expansion of an organization's activities does not necessarily imply that farmers have greater opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

Drawing on these contributions, the re-embedding of agricultural activity can be defined as a potential process of transforming economic relationships and rules through which the actors concerned strengthen their capacity to collectively discuss and redefine the objectives and decisions guiding their activities. This conceptualization raises questions about the conditions under which collective initiatives can reshape the ways in which resources are used and the commitments that structure agricultural activity.

3. Theoretical Approaches to Re-embedding and Regulation

Economic behavior is influenced by interpersonal relationships and the networks in which actors are embedded. Economic exchanges are shaped, in particular, by mutual familiarity, previous experiences, and commitments that can facilitate access to certain resources. In his discussion of Granovetter's work, Bihl (2020) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between direct interpersonal relationships and broader configurations of social networks. This approach helps explain how opportunities for action depend on the positions occupied by actors within economic and social relationships.

Within rural organizations, these networks can facilitate knowledge exchange, the identification of commercial partners, and the mobilization of institutional support. However, networks do not necessarily generate equivalent benefits for all participants. They may also perpetuate forms of dependency or restrict access to certain resources for actors who remain at their periphery. Moreover, the existence of social relationships alone does not explain how particular practices may lead to changes in economic rules. Addressing this issue requires drawing on theoretical approaches to institutional change.

Institutionalist approaches make it possible to conceptualize economic rules as arrangements that can be negotiated and modified through actors' practices. From this perspective, change is not limited to the adoption of new technologies or improvements in productive performance. It may also involve transformations in cooperation mechanisms, the distribution of responsibilities, and the rules governing economic activities.

The work of Besançon and Chochoy (2015) on social innovation provides valuable insights into this issue. The authors emphasize that the significance of an initiative should be assessed in relation to the collective processes underlying its development and the transformations it introduces within a given context. A practice may constitute an innovation when it alters previously established arrangements, even if comparable experiences already exist in other territories.

This approach also highlights the importance of learning processes and interorganizational relationships. New practices may emerge through the exchange of experiences, the identification of shared needs, and the search for collective solutions. However, their dissemination depends on available resources, territorial characteristics, and opportunities for adaptation. Besançon and Chochoy (2015) thus demonstrate that replication, learning, and institutional recognition represent distinct processes that do not necessarily occur automatically.

In this regard, public recognition of collective initiatives can strengthen their legitimacy, facilitate access to funding, and contribute to the stabilization of certain practices. Nevertheless, it may also introduce administrative requirements that could alter their original objectives. This tension is consistent with the analyses of Degavre and Lemaître (2008) concerning the political embeddedness of social economy organizations, as well as those of Boudes (2017) regarding the coexistence of different institutional logics. Rural organizations can therefore be understood as arenas in which market requirements, collective commitments, and public interventions intersect. Their functioning often involves negotiating compromises among these different dimensions.

Table 1. Theoretical Approaches to the Re-embedding and Regulation of Agricultural Activity

Theoretical Approaches	Contributions to the Analysis of Agricultural Activity	References
Substantive Approach and Plural Economy	Understanding the coexistence of market-based, public, and reciprocity-based logics in the functioning of agricultural organizations.	Polanyi; Laville (2001); Servet (2007)
Relational Approach to Embeddedness	Explaining how relationships among farmers facilitate access to information, resources, and partners.	Granovetter; Bihl (2020)
Institutionalist Approach to Social Innovation	Understanding how collective initiatives can introduce new forms of cooperation and agricultural organization.	Besançon and Chochoy (2015); Elsner et al. (2025)
Neo-institutionalist Approach and Organizational Hybridity	Analyzing trade-offs between economic requirements, collective objectives, and institutional constraints within cooperatives.	Boudes (2017); Longton and Scholl (2026)
Mesoeconomic Approach and Meso-level Regulation	Examining the conditions under which organizational changes can generate transformations at the territorial or sectoral level.	Bodet et al. (2025, 2026); Celle et al. (2026)
Systems Approach to Organizations	Examining the interrelationships among agricultural organizations, territories, markets, and institutions within an integrated analytical framework.	El Karkour (2025)

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the literature review.

The analysis of social relationships and institutional change raises questions about the extent to which transformations extend beyond individual organizations. The mesoeconomic approach provides a framework for exploring this issue by focusing on the spaces of coordination that emerge between individual initiatives and broader economic structures. Bodet, Lamarche, and Richez-Battesti (2025) suggest that these spaces should be understood as configurations of productive, social, and institutional relationships whose coherence emerges through collective processes. From this perspective, the meso level refers to arrangements through which multiple organizations and economic actors develop specific forms of coordination.

This perspective is further developed by Celle, Ballon, and Lévesque (2026), who emphasize the importance of distinguishing between the meso approach as an analytical framework and actually constituted meso-level spaces. The existence of a network or territory is therefore insufficient to demonstrate that a distinct space of regulation has emerged. It is necessary to identify the shared rules, commitments among stakeholders, and coordination mechanisms that contribute to structuring economic activities.

In the agricultural sector, this perspective helps explain why practices such as resource pooling, mutual assistance, and participation may remain confined to the internal functioning of a particular organization. However, when these practices are adopted by several collective groups, give rise to commitments among partners, or contribute to changes in existing institutional arrangements, they may acquire broader significance. This approach also makes it possible to integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of agricultural activities. Marketing conditions, work organization, and natural resource use can thus be examined jointly, as transformations in these areas may mutually influence one another (Bodet et al., 2025).

Taken together, the substantive, relational, institutionalist, and mesoeconomic approaches provide complementary perspectives for understanding the different dimensions of re-embedding. Their integration makes it possible to examine rural organizations as potential spaces for developing collective capacities and establishing shared rules.

Recent studies on agricultural cooperatives further highlight the importance of an analytical perspective that extends beyond economic outcomes alone. Based on a systematic review of 274 publications, Chollet et al. (2026) identify the predominant emphasis placed on economic and financial dimensions of performance, compared with social, environmental, and governance dimensions. This observation reinforces the need to distinguish between the economic continuity of organizations and their capacity to sustain collective practices and influence the rules governing their activities. From a complementary perspective, Chang et al. (2026), drawing on a study of a specialized village in China, demonstrate that certain market relationships established through cooperative action may persist even when the organization's direct coordinating role diminishes. These contributions suggest the importance of examining separately the continuity of organizational structures, the capacities they have developed, and the economic arrangements that may persist beyond their initial involvement.

Recent research on agri-food initiatives also suggests that collective capacities emerge through processes combining knowledge, productive resources, and relationships among stakeholders. Elsner et al. (2025) emphasize that knowledge creation and exchange contribute to social innovation processes, while Rossi et al. (2026), drawing on the experience of a women's cooperative in Morocco, examine the relationships between business model innovation, the valorization of agricultural products, and consumer preferences. Considered together, these studies indicate that collective capacities extend beyond improvements in technical skills. They also encompass the ability to understand market expectations, adapt productive activities, and develop shared strategic orientations.

4. The Role of Rural Organizations in Collective and Territorial Dynamics

Rural organizations can contribute to expanding farmers' opportunities for action by developing joint activities. Resource pooling represents one of the most visible functions of these organizations.

Mamdy and Terrieux (2014) demonstrate that agricultural cooperation can support different production strategies and contribute to the development of services. More recently, Mouret (2025) distinguishes between technical cooperation, which focuses on sharing resources and functions, and more strategic forms of cooperation involving joint projects and shared responsibilities. This distinction highlights that resource pooling may primarily serve efficiency objectives without necessarily leading to a redefinition of economic goals.

In the Moroccan context, Tirou (2022), drawing on a study of dairy cooperatives in the Middle Atlas region, provides insights into the economic and social contributions of cooperative organizations. These findings highlight the importance of collective organizational structures in coordinating agricultural activities, while leaving open questions concerning the distribution of benefits among members and the conditions required to sustain them over time.

Table 2. The Role of Rural Organizations in Collective and Territorial Dynamics

Dimensions	Mechanisms	Contributions to Agricultural Activity
Resource Pooling	Sharing of equipment, financial resources, and agricultural services; organization of joint activities.	Reduction of certain individual constraints, improved access to means of production, and enhancement of farmers' capacities for action.
Mutual Assistance and Reciprocity	Labor exchange, mutual support, sharing of services, and commitments among farmers.	Strengthening of cooperative relationships and mobilization of complementary resources.
Learning and Collective Capacities	Knowledge exchange, training, information sharing, and learning processes among members.	Skills development, improved coordination, and expanded opportunities for collective action.
Valorization of Local Knowledge and Territorial Resources	Mobilization of local knowledge, valorization of agricultural products, and development of territorial projects.	Recognition of local resources, diversification of activities, and creation of new economic opportunities.
Interorganizational Cooperation	Networking, exchange of experiences, project coordination, and interorganizational commitments.	Access to complementary resources, dissemination of practices, and strengthening of coordination capacities.
Relationships with Institutional Stakeholders	Public partnerships, institutional support mechanisms, representation, and participation in territorial development projects.	Access to institutional support, recognition of farmers' needs, and opportunities for collective negotiation.

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the literature review.

Mutual assistance represents another dimension of collective action. It may take the form of labor exchanges, service sharing, knowledge transfer, or material support. Sabourin (2007) demonstrates that

these practices can contribute to building relationships based on mutual recognition and commitment among farmers. However, their significance depends on the conditions under which individual contributions are defined and responsibilities are distributed.

This ambivalence is also reflected in Chiweshe's (2014) research on agricultural solidarity in Zimbabwe. The mutual assistance practices examined in this study show that cooperative relationships can gradually develop among farmers who do not necessarily share longstanding community ties. Nevertheless, opportunities to participate in collective arrangements remain influenced by available resources and the obligations associated with participation.

Resource pooling and mutual assistance should therefore be regarded as potential foundations for collective action rather than as guarantees of solidarity or democratic participation. Their contribution to re-embedding depends on the extent to which they transform farmers' opportunities for action and participation in decision-making.

Beyond resource pooling, rural organizations can contribute to the development of collective capacities through knowledge exchange and learning processes. Affaghrou and Ahrouch (2022), in their study of groups in the Souss-Massa region, highlight the importance of interorganizational relationships in facilitating knowledge sharing. Their contribution suggests that knowledge should be understood as a collective resource whose significance depends on the mechanisms through which it is exchanged and mobilized through cooperation. Similarly, Derkaoui et al. (2026) examine the conditions under which training programs provided by support institutions contribute to the resilience of Moroccan agricultural cooperatives. Their research emphasizes the importance of appropriate and continuous support.

Local knowledge and traditional know-how play a particularly important role in these processes. Their significance lies in the social relationships that facilitate their transmission and adaptation. Recent research by Belabbes et al. (2025), focusing on territorial intelligence and agricultural decision-making in Morocco, further develops this perspective by highlighting the role of information and relationships with agricultural advisory services. Their findings emphasize the importance of considering both access to knowledge and its relevance to farmers' needs.

Collective capacities therefore depend on available resources, knowledge, and the mechanisms through which these resources can be effectively mobilized. However, analyzing territorial dynamics requires moving beyond an understanding of cooperation based solely on geographical proximity. Colletis et al. (2005) demonstrate that relationships among stakeholders also depend on organizational frameworks and shared rules. Similarly, Itçaina (2010) emphasizes the importance of social and institutional trajectories in building trust and territorial coordination. Although geographical proximity may facilitate interactions, it is not sufficient, in itself, to generate sustainable collective action.

Cooperation may take different forms depending on the objectives pursued. Some forms involve occasional joint activities, while others require more extensive commitments concerning resources, responsibilities, or the implementation of shared projects. Muller and Tanguy (2019) highlight the role that intermediary organizations can play in facilitating these processes.

Nevertheless, the multiplication of partnerships does not necessarily ensure equal participation in decision-making. Fraisse (2017) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between stakeholder consultation and effective participation in the formulation of public policies. An organization may be involved in implementing a program without participating in the definition of its objectives or selection criteria. Studies conducted in Morocco provide further insights into these relationships. Zein Taleb et al. (2024)

demonstrate, in the Todgha Ferkla oases, that local leaders can play an important role in mobilizing resources and establishing relationships with institutions. However, the continuity of collective initiatives may depend heavily on the skills and commitment of these leaders, raising questions about the transfer of capacities and the participation of other members.

The territorial significance of cooperation can also be assessed through the development of shared resources. Artis et al. (2009) emphasize that territorial resources can emerge from processes of collective activation involving different categories of stakeholders. The work of Chakir and Gebrati (2026), focusing on solidarity-based mountain tourism in Morocco's High Atlas region, illustrates the potential for creating linkages between agricultural production, local know-how, and territorial economic activities.

The analysis of collective capacities can be further enriched by recent research examining the relationships between organizations and territories. Nordell and Nyström (2026), drawing on cooperatives in the Champagne-Ardenne region, demonstrate that cooperative identity is shaped not only through internal organizational practices but also through relationships with the broader economic and territorial environment. In the Moroccan context, Bouichou and Fadlaoui (2026) identify associations between market conditions, activity diversification, territorial characteristics, and the perceived economic performance of agricultural cooperatives. These studies highlight that organizational capacities cannot be fully understood independently of external resources and constraints.

Recent studies conducted in Morocco provide additional insights into the relationships between territorial cooperation, governance, and the continuity of agricultural activities. Drawing on the date palm sector in the Drâa-Tafilalet region, Messoussi and Chiabri (2025) examine the role of cooperative governance in strengthening organizational resilience in the face of environmental and socioeconomic constraints. Their approach highlights the importance of jointly examining internal coordination mechanisms, territorial resources, and relationships with external partners. From a complementary perspective, Najjar et al. (2025), in their research on women's leadership in cooperatives across Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon, identify financial, organizational, and social barriers that may restrict women's access to leadership positions and decision-making spaces. Considered together, these contributions suggest that the capacity of rural organizations to influence territorial dynamics depends not only on the existence of partnerships or available resources but also on governance arrangements that enable different categories of members to participate in shaping collective priorities.

Recent research also helps clarify the conditions under which membership in an agricultural organization translates into effective opportunities for collective action. Based on a meta-analysis of 168 studies, Grashuis (2025) demonstrates that participation in cooperative structures is associated with several individual and economic characteristics of farmers, including age, educational attainment, productive resources, and access to credit. From a complementary perspective, Cornée et al. (2025), drawing on French agricultural machinery-sharing cooperatives, highlight the role of interactions among farmers and shared equipment in certain changes in environmental practices. These contributions therefore underscore the importance of distinguishing between membership in an organization, the effective use of shared resources, and the transformations that may result from their mobilization.

5. Mechanisms of Transformation in Agricultural Modes of Regulation

Transformations in agricultural modes of regulation can be examined through the rules governing decision-making and the distribution of responsibilities within rural organizations. These rules contribute

to structuring economic relationships beyond their administrative functions. However, members may possess similar formal rights while facing unequal opportunities to access information, put forward proposals, or exercise oversight over decisions. Berrada (2025), in a study on the governance of Moroccan agricultural cooperatives, highlights the importance of examining the relationships between control mechanisms, information sharing, and the capacity for action. This perspective emphasizes the need to analyze actual governance practices rather than focusing exclusively on statutory procedures.

Access to information is particularly important in this regard. The disclosure of financial statements, commercial commitments, and conditions governing resource use can contribute to making decisions more transparent and understandable. The work of Maisonnasse et al. (2019) on management tools in the social and solidarity economy suggests that these instruments can serve as mechanisms supporting collective regulation, although their effectiveness depends on how organizational members understand and use them. Rules governing work represent another essential dimension. Agricultural activities may involve farmers, employees, family members, and association leaders whose contributions are not necessarily recognized or valued equally. In this regard, Hély and Moulévrier (2013) caution against assuming that declared collective objectives automatically guarantee equitable working conditions.

Similarly, the capacity for action of rural organizations depends not only on their internal rules but also on the relationships they establish with buyers, suppliers, and other economic partners. Bargaining power is influenced, in particular, by the information available and the degree of flexibility farmers have in commercial negotiations. Product characteristics, perishability, and cash flow requirements may also limit their ability to reject commercial offers. This distinction is consistent with Draperi (2015), who emphasizes that market activities can be organized around collective objectives without necessarily prioritizing returns on capital. Participation in market exchanges therefore does not exclude the possibility of establishing collectively defined rules.

Recent research by Sano et al. (2024), focusing on Dutch horticultural cooperatives, provides additional insights into the relationships between embeddedness and organizational transformations. Their work highlights the importance of considering internal governance and members' relationships with their organizations when analyzing processes of organizational change.

Beyond sales conditions, the distribution of value represents a central issue. An increase in marketed volumes or turnover does not necessarily translate into equivalent improvements in income for all members. Economic returns must also cover operating costs, compensate labor, and potentially finance collective investments. Decisions concerning resource allocation therefore involve trade-offs that may generate differentiated outcomes among stakeholders.

Lahlimi (2024), in research on value creation within the social and solidarity economy, emphasizes the importance of jointly considering the economic, social, and territorial dimensions of economic activities. Applied to agriculture, this perspective highlights the need to distinguish between the value generated and the mechanisms through which it is distributed among farmers, their organizations, and other actors along the value chain.

Table 3. Summary of the Mechanisms Transforming Agricultural Modes of Regulation

Dimensions of Regulation	Mechanisms of Transformation
Decision-Making and Governance Rules	Member participation, information sharing, collective deliberation, and oversight of organizational leaders.

Work Organization and Access to Resources	Collective definition of responsibilities, sharing of equipment, revision of resource access rules, and recognition of individual and collective contributions.
Commercial Relationships and Bargaining Power	Collective marketing, diversification of market outlets, negotiation of prices, and contractual commitments.
Distribution of Value and Risks	Collective discussion of remuneration arrangements, allocation of financial results, cost-sharing mechanisms, and distribution of losses.
Territorial and Interorganizational Coordination	Cooperation among organizations, development of shared commitments, and negotiation with economic and institutional partners.
Institutional and Sectoral Transformation	Dissemination of collective practices, participation in the design of public support mechanisms, and recognition and institutionalization of new rules.

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the literature review.

Risk-sharing must also be taken into consideration. Agricultural activities remain exposed to uncertainties related to climatic conditions, market prices, product quality, and payment delays. Losses and financial difficulties may be managed in different ways depending on the rules established within organizations. Examining these arrangements helps clarify how economic responsibilities are distributed, particularly when agricultural activities encounter difficulties. Andriot (2023), in research on agricultural and food transitions, extends this discussion by emphasizing the importance of value-added distribution and relationships between farmers and territories. Similarly, Maughan et al. (2025), in their study of alternative grain networks, highlight the importance of considering the collective governance arrangements that accompany economic exchanges. These contributions suggest that the analysis of agricultural initiatives should not be limited to market diversification but should also examine the rules governing commitments and responsibilities.

Demoustier and Richez-Battesti (2010) provide valuable theoretical insights into the relationships between the social and solidarity economy, governance, and territorial regulation. Their work emphasizes the importance of considering the role of collective organizations in the coordination processes developed among economic and institutional stakeholders.

One potential mechanism through which transformations can extend beyond individual organizations is the dissemination of practices across organizations. Knowledge exchange, support mechanisms, and cooperative experiences can facilitate the adoption of particular organizational arrangements. However, as Besançon and Chochoy (2015) emphasize, dissemination requires processes of learning and adaptation. When a practice is adopted in another context, its objectives, implementation conditions, or the relationships it establishes among stakeholders may be modified.

Networks and representative organizations can also contribute to the formulation of shared demands. Fraisse (2017) provides further insights into this issue through the concept of the co-construction of public policies. An organization may participate in implementing a program without having contributed to its design. Conversely, certain collective initiatives may enable stakeholders to obtain recognition of emerging needs or secure adjustments to eligibility criteria and intervention mechanisms.

The temporal dimension represents another important consideration. A new rule may remain in place as long as funding is available or a particular leader ensures coordination, but it may subsequently be abandoned when circumstances change. Ibourk and El Aynaoui (2023), in their research on the survival of Moroccan agricultural cooperatives, highlight the importance of distinguishing between the legal continuity of an organization and the effective preservation of its capacities and collective practices.

Consequently, the transition from organizational changes to territorial and sectoral transformations should not be regarded as automatic. It depends on the resources mobilized, the relationships established among stakeholders, and opportunities for negotiation and institutional recognition. The re-embedding of agricultural activity can therefore be examined through situations in which these processes effectively contribute to making economic priorities and organizational rules more open to collective definition and revision.

Recent research provides further insights into the relationships between organizational participation, bargaining power, and the transformation of economic rules. Li et al. (2026) examine the relationships between farmers' participation in collective organizations and their commercial bargaining capacities, while El Hassouni and El Bakkouchi (2025) highlight the power asymmetries that may characterize relationships between leaders and members of Moroccan cooperatives. These contributions emphasize the need to distinguish between an organization's representative capacity and farmers' effective participation in the decisions and positions it advocates. Furthermore, Etches (2026) demonstrates that territorial food partnerships can support the development of shared priorities while encountering difficulties in achieving lasting transformations in governance arrangements. Accordingly, the significance of collective initiatives should be assessed in relation to the rules that have actually been modified and the conditions under which the resulting changes can be sustained.

Commercial relationships also represent an arena in which agricultural organizations may seek to strengthen their bargaining power and redefine certain conditions of economic exchange. In this regard, Xie et al. (2025), drawing on a model of interactions between agricultural cooperatives and buyers, demonstrate that negotiation outcomes depend, in particular, on power imbalances between partners and uncertainties surrounding agricultural yields. Their analysis highlights that cooperation among organizations does not automatically guarantee equivalent improvements in commercial conditions for all participants. In the Moroccan context, Rossi et al. (2026) examine the relationships between organizational innovation, agricultural product valorization, and consumer preferences within a women's agri-food cooperative. Considered together, these contributions make it possible to distinguish between two complementary dimensions: the capacity of organizations to develop commercial offerings adapted to market opportunities and their ability to negotiate the economic commitments associated with these offerings.

Recent studies on cooperative governance also highlight tensions that may arise between representation requirements, managerial competencies, and member participation. Drawing on Finnish agricultural cooperatives, Huhtala and Saarijärvi (2025) identify tensions surrounding the composition of governing bodies and the responsibilities assigned to board members. From a complementary perspective, Bokoumbo et al. (2026), based on cooperatives in Togo, propose an approach to evaluating governance practices grounded in cooperative principles, particularly democratic member control and members' economic participation. These contributions are consistent with the concerns raised by El Hassouni and El Bakkouchi (2025) regarding power asymmetries within Moroccan cooperatives. Taken together, they

highlight the importance of moving beyond the formal existence of democratic governance structures to examine actual opportunities for accessing information, holding leaders accountable, and participating in decision-making processes.

Recent studies further suggest that the transformation of agricultural activity may also emerge from collective practices gradually developed within farmers' organizations. Byaruhanga et al. (2025), drawing on the Ugandan context, emphasize that the everyday activities of agricultural groups can provide spaces for expressing shared concerns and developing alternatives to production strategies primarily defined by external institutions. Similarly, O'Connor et al. (2026) highlight the importance of the collective autonomy of smallholder farmers in initiatives aimed at promoting more equitable food systems. These studies suggest that rural organizations should be understood not only as structures facilitating production and marketing but also as spaces in which stakeholders can articulate common concerns and deliberate on economic priorities. Nevertheless, the findings of Iliopoulos et al. (2026), focusing on Mediterranean agricultural cooperatives, indicate that financial constraints, governance difficulties, and inequalities in representation may restrict these opportunities.

6. Conclusion

This literature review has examined the relationships between the re-embedding of agricultural activity, collective action undertaken by rural organizations, and potential transformations in modes of regulation. The studies reviewed demonstrate that agricultural activity cannot be reduced to its productive and market dimensions, as it is also shaped by social relationships, territorial resources, and institutional rules that influence actors' decisions.

The review highlights that rural organizations can contribute to strengthening farmers' capacities for action through resource pooling, mutual assistance, collective learning, and territorial cooperation. However, these practices do not necessarily lead to transformations in economic rules. Their significance depends on the opportunities available to members to have their needs recognized, participate in decision-making processes, and negotiate the commitments governing their activities.

One of the main findings of this article is therefore the need to distinguish between the benefits associated with collective organization and the actual transformations introduced into agricultural modes of regulation. Improvements in income, access to new equipment, or the development of partnerships may represent significant achievements without necessarily altering decision-making power relations, marketing rules, or the mechanisms governing the distribution of resources and risks.

Accordingly, re-embedding can be understood as a potential process through which the objectives and rules governing agricultural activity are collectively redefined. This conceptualization calls for examining the conditions under which stakeholders can deliberate on their priorities, develop shared capacities, and potentially contribute to reshaping existing economic and institutional arrangements.

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