

Towards a Sovereign Industry in Morocco: Insights into the Dynamic Capabilities of Moroccan Cooperatives and Reflections on the National Preference Policy.

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Déclaration de divulgation : L'auteur n'a pas connaissance de quelconque financement qui pourrait affecter l'objectivité de cette étude.

Conflit d'intérêts : L'auteur ne signale aucun conflit d'intérêts.

Pour citer cet article : IHENDYANE. I, EL AISSAOUI. H, EL KADIRI. K & MANSOUR. A (2024) « Towards a Sovereign Industry in Morocco: Insights into the Dynamic Capabilities of Moroccan Cooperatives and Reflections on the National Preference Policy », African Scientific Journal « Volume 03, Numéro 26 » pp: 0240– 0270.

Date de soumission : Septembre 2024

Date de publication : Octobre 2024



DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.13886085
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ABSTRACT:

This article explores the interaction between Moroccan cooperatives and the national preference policy within the context of the country's industrial development. Drawing on theoretical and documentary analysis, the study highlights how cooperatives, by leveraging their ability to innovate, adapt, and learn, play a pivotal role in strengthening the national industry. The approach taken demonstrates how these organizations align with the goals of the national preference policy while enhancing their competitiveness and resilience. The findings underscore the importance of continuous adaptation to market demands and industrial priorities in Morocco, with particular attention to ethics and innovation. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for cooperatives to strengthen their contribution to national economic development through strategies tailored to the demands of an ever-evolving environment.

- **Keywords:** Dynamic capabilities, National preference, Industrial policy, Cooperatives, Made in Morocco.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article explore l'interaction entre les coopératives marocaines et la politique de préférence nationale dans le contexte du développement industriel du pays. En s'appuyant sur une analyse théorique et documentaire, l'étude met en lumière la manière dont les coopératives, en tirant parti de leurs capacités à innover, à s'adapter et à apprendre, jouent un rôle crucial dans le renforcement de l'industrie nationale. L'approche adoptée permet de comprendre comment ces organisations s'alignent sur les objectifs de la politique de préférence nationale tout en renforçant leur compétitivité et leur résilience. Les résultats soulignent l'importance de l'adaptation continue des coopératives aux exigences du marché et aux priorités industrielles du Maroc, avec une attention particulière accordée à l'éthique et à l'innovation. En conclusion, l'étude met en avant la nécessité pour ces structures de consolider leur contribution au développement économique national par des stratégies adaptées aux exigences d'un environnement en constante évolution.

- **Mots clés :** Capacités dynamiques, Préférence nationale, Politique industrielle, Coopératives, Made in Morocco.

INTRODUCTION

Industrial policy is at the heart of the economic development strategy of an increasing number of countries, and the Kingdom of Morocco is no exception. In an era where globalisation and free trade dominate international commercial relations, the challenge of maintaining and promoting a strong national industry is complex and requires a delicate balance between protectionism and engagement in the global market.

In this context, the "Made in Morocco" label is emblematic of a broader trend towards valuing and promoting national products and services. It symbolises not only national pride and quality but also serves as a strategic tool in the national preference policy. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is closely linked to the dynamic capabilities present within the Kingdom's cooperatives.

The "Made in Morocco" label has never been as strong as it was during the health crisis (M. Ryad MEZZOUR, 2022) as it added unprecedented urgency and complexity to this debate. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of global supply chains (DERRIEN, 2021) and highlighted the need to strengthen resilience and sovereignty at the national level. It also underscored the importance of local industries in responding to crises and the necessity for greater autonomy in key areas such as pharmaceutical and food production.

Since his accession to the throne in 1999, King Mohammed VI, in his speeches, has consistently expressed his concern for the national industry, continually offering guidance and a clear vision for Morocco.

On the occasion of the 1st edition of the National Industry Day, held on 23 March 2023 in Casablanca, a message from His Majesty King Mohammed VI was delivered by the Minister of Industry and Trade, Mr Ryad MEZZOUR, and presented to the participants. In this powerful and visionary message, the Sovereign emphasised the need to prepare intensively for a new industrial era, one in which the notion of sovereignty will play a central role (*Message from HM King Med VI to participants in the 1st National Industry Day, 2023*).

Morocco's industrial future should be based on a dual strategy: embracing global opportunities while ensuring the protection and promotion of intrinsic national capabilities. This approach would guarantee a strong presence on the international stage while fostering development deeply rooted in Moroccan identity.

At the heart of national capabilities are cooperatives, which play a crucial role in local and social development through their dynamic capacities. This significance is highlighted by the substantial increase in their number, rising from 27,262 in 2019 (International Co-Operative, 2020) to 53,856 in 2023 (ODCO, 2023). Today, these cooperatives have 723,339 members and include 7,360 women's cooperatives (ODCO, 2023), illustrating their growing and diversified contribution to the socio-economic fabric. As a result, cooperatives have proven to be key players in the Moroccan economic landscape, particularly in the agricultural sector. It is worth noting that this sector ranks first in the cooperative fabric, accounting for 62% (Ahrouch, 2011). Strongly supported by these organisations, it represents more than 12% of GDP (World Bank Group, 2023) and employs nearly 27.8% of the workforce (HCP, 2023).

Operating in various sectors such as agriculture, handicrafts, tourism, and services, cooperatives are rooted in values of solidarity, equity, and economic democracy. These characteristics distinguish them from other forms of enterprise and provide them with a unique potential to support the national preference strategy and strengthen Morocco's economic fabric. Their presence is a pivotal factor in achieving optimal performance and sustainable development in the country.

In this regard, dynamic capabilities, as defined by (Teece et al., 1997) as the organisation's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to respond to rapid changes in the environment (Parmentier, 2023), play a key role in the implementation of the national preference policy. They can either facilitate or hinder the achievement of economic and industrial objectives, such as the pursuit of industrial sovereignty.

Free trade, for example, often presented as one of the conditions for growth (Sapir, 2010), can stimulate innovation, efficiency, and economic growth by opening markets to international competition. It improves the range and quality of products available to consumers (OECD, 1998), allowing them access to a wider variety of goods at more competitive prices. However, it can also expose vulnerable national industries to overwhelming competition, leading to job losses and the decline of certain industrial sectors.

Conversely, protectionism is often seen as a way to defend national industries, in this context cooperatives, against foreign competition by using measures such as tariffs, import quotas, standards, and administrative authorisations (Universalis, 2015). However, excessive reliance

on this strategy can have negative consequences, such as limiting innovation, reducing competitiveness, and creating global trade tensions.

In this complex and often contradictory landscape, the importance of leveraging dynamic capabilities to harmonise these competing trends is becoming increasingly evident. It is within this context that the central question of this article arises: How do the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan cooperatives influence the implementation of the national preference policy and contribute to the establishment of a sovereign industry in Morocco? Our aim is to shed light on the paths towards strong economic sovereignty for Moroccan cooperatives, while promoting the "Made in Morocco" label within the complex framework of today's global trade.

Throughout this analysis, we will first explore the historical and current role of Moroccan cooperatives as key players in economic and social development, while examining the main organisational and dynamic capabilities that influence their performance. We will then delve into the growing importance of the interaction between the national preference policy and the dynamic capabilities of cooperatives, with a focus on the alternating movements of globalisation and their implications for the Moroccan economy. Finally, we will assess how these capabilities, such as innovation, adaptation, and learning, enable cooperatives to position themselves within the framework of the national industrial policy, with particular emphasis on the 'Made in Morocco' label.

This study is especially important as research on the interaction between these two concepts, particularly in the context of Moroccan cooperatives, still presents some gaps. Therefore, in the following sections, we offer an academic justification for this study, as well as a contribution to the existing literature, highlighting the specific aspects that make this research both relevant and innovative.

I - Justification and academic contribution:

The analysis of the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan cooperatives and their interaction with the national preference policy reveals several significant gaps in the existing literature. Although the subject has been extensively explored in the context of SMEs and large enterprises, there are specific aspects of cooperatives that require more in-depth attention. The main gaps identified are as follows:

- **Lack of specific research on Moroccan cooperatives:** The majority of studies focus on dynamic capabilities in the context of SMEs and large enterprises, often neglecting cooperatives. Moroccan cooperatives, with their unique governance and operational characteristics, require a specific approach to understand how their dynamic capabilities influence their performance and adaptation to the national preference policy.
- **Insufficient studies on the impact of the national preference policy:** Although the national preference policy is a crucial lever for promoting local economic development, few studies have examined its direct impact on cooperatives. The existing literature does not provide sufficient data on how these policies are perceived and implemented by cooperatives, nor on their effectiveness in supporting their development and integration into the national economy.
- **Lack of integrated theoretical models:** The literature lacks integrated theoretical models that combine the concepts of dynamic capabilities and national preference policy specifically for cooperatives. Existing models often focus on different sectors or types of enterprises, leaving a gap in understanding how these two dimensions interact within the context of Moroccan cooperatives.
- **Lack of empirical studies:** There is a lack of empirical studies exploring the practical challenges and successes of Moroccan cooperatives in relation to the national preference policy. Specific empirical data on the performance of cooperatives, their ability to adapt to public policies, and their promotion of the 'Made in Morocco' label are limited, which hinders the formulation of practical recommendations.

Methodological approach :

This research adopts a qualitative approach, grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, in order to better understand the social and economic dynamics influencing Moroccan cooperatives within the framework of the national preference policy. The study is based on a detailed review of existing literature and public policy documents, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the interactions between cooperatives and national frameworks. This methodology explores how dynamic capabilities, such as innovation, adaptability, and ethical governance, strengthen the contribution of cooperatives to industrial development and economic sovereignty in Morocco.

II - Decryption of key concepts:

The interaction between the national preference policy and the dynamic capabilities of cooperatives is an area of study which, although still emerging, is of crucial importance for Morocco today. In this country, where global market dynamics are marked by the alternating forces of globalisation, the opening of economic borders, and the advent of the new economy, a new geo-socio-economic landscape is taking shape (Rochdane & Ayegou, 2009), presenting a range of challenges and opportunities for businesses. Cooperatives, due to their size, agility, and specific constraints, are particularly affected by these trends.

Faced with its growing desire to consolidate its industrial identity and promote policies that favour national initiatives, Morocco is at a crucial turning point. On the one hand, it seeks to reap the benefits of globalisation by attracting foreign investment and accessing larger markets. On the other, it aims to promote local manufacturing, strengthen Moroccan capital in industry, entrepreneurship, and industrial integration (Project Bank, 2022), with particular focus on cooperatives, which play a fundamental role in its economy.

In order to gain a better understanding of the issues and dynamics discussed, it is essential to define precisely certain key terms that form the backbone of our study. These key words, central to our analysis, will shed light on the situation of Moroccan cooperatives in the face of the challenges and opportunities of the current economic landscape.

1 – Cooperatives: Foundations and contributions to development.

Moroccan cooperatives are vital pillars of economic and social development, deeply rooted in the country's traditions of solidarity and mutual aid. From their origins in ancestral community practices to their modern role in the formal economy, they have also evolved to address the contemporary challenges of sustainable development and economic integration.

1.1 - History of cooperatives in Morocco:

Cooperatives in Morocco have a long history rooted in traditional practices of solidarity and mutual aid, such as Touiza¹ and Tagadirt², which existed long before modern times. These practices enabled local communities to work together to carry out agricultural tasks, manage natural resources, and support education and other social needs.

The formal development of cooperatives in Morocco began during the colonial period. In 1937, the protectorate authorities encouraged the creation of the first cooperatives, mainly in the agricultural and craft sectors, for economic and political reasons. On the eve of independence in 1956, Morocco had 62 cooperatives. After independence, the Moroccan government recognised the importance of cooperatives for the country's socio-economic development and began actively supporting them through various policies, including the creation of the Office for the Development of Cooperation (ODCO) in 1962 (ARRIFI & AL MADANI, 2017).

Between 1984 and 2000, the legislative framework for cooperatives was strengthened with the adoption of Law No. 24-83, which granted cooperatives more autonomy, promoted member training, and allowed the creation of cooperative unions. Since 2000, cooperatives have been used as an important tool for job creation, integrating women into the workforce, and organising the informal sector, notably through programmes such as the National Initiative for Human Development and the Green Morocco Plan (ODCO, 2012).

1.2 – Definition:

A cooperative is a group of natural and/or legal persons who agree to come together to create an enterprise that enables them to satisfy their economic and social needs and is managed in accordance with internationally recognised values and fundamental principles of cooperation, including: - Voluntary and open membership; - Democratic management of cooperatives; - Economic participation of members; - Autonomy and independence; - Education, training, and information; - Cooperation among cooperatives; - Commitment to the community (Law no. 112-12 on cooperatives, 2014).

¹ Is a traditional form of collective mutual aid in Morocco. It is a practice in which members of a community or village come together to carry out important tasks, such as building a house, harvesting, or other labour-intensive activities.

² Originally a collective farm or barn, historically used by villagers to store their crops together, particularly grain. Today, it embodies community cooperation where each family contributes to collective agricultural work, with benefits shared according to each person's contribution.

With this understanding of what a cooperative is, it is now possible to explore the different types of cooperatives in Morocco, each with a particular function and significance in the country's economic landscape.

1.3 - Types of cooperatives:

Moroccan cooperatives are mainly divided into three categories:

- **Agricultural cooperatives:** They make up the majority of cooperatives in Morocco, accounting for 65% of the total number of cooperatives (ODCO, 2012). These cooperatives are essential for the production and marketing of agricultural products. They are also involved in processing activities, such as milk collection and processing, thus contributing to food security and rural development.
- **Artisanal Cooperatives:** Craft cooperatives bring together artisans working in various traditional trades such as pottery, weaving, and carpet production. In December 2011, they accounted for around 13% of cooperatives, with 24,008 members (ODCO, 2012). These cooperatives play a crucial role in preserving traditional Moroccan craftsmanship and promoting the 'Made in Morocco' label. They enable artisans to unite in order to improve the quality of their products, access new markets, and secure more stable incomes.
- **Service cooperatives:** Although less widespread, these cooperatives play an essential role in sectors such as transport, education, and housing. They work to improve the living conditions of their members and the communities they serve, while strengthening local economic development.

In addition to these three main categories, there are other types of cooperatives that meet specific needs, such as transport cooperatives, housing cooperatives, medicinal plant cooperatives, tourism cooperatives, and industrial production cooperatives. Each of these cooperatives is designed to meet specific objectives while adhering to the fundamental principles of cooperation, thereby contributing to Morocco's economic and social development.

1.4 - Cooperatives: Actors in Morocco's economic and social development.

Moroccan cooperatives are key players in economic and social development, playing a crucial role in improving living conditions for communities, particularly in rural areas. Rooted in

traditions of solidarity and cooperation, cooperatives enable small producers, artisans, and other members to pool their resources to achieve common goals. These collective structures not only promote job creation and income generation but also foster social inclusion by integrating often marginalised groups, such as women and young people, into the formal economy (ODCO, 2012).

Cooperatives also help to promote the 'Made in Morocco' label by ensuring the traceability and quality of local products. They play a central role in the national preference policy, ensuring that local resources are prioritised in the production and marketing of goods. Through sustainable practices and the promotion of traditional craftsmanship, these cooperative enterprises make a significant contribution to poverty reduction, job creation, and social inclusion. In this way, they enhance the competitiveness of Moroccan products in both national and international markets, while supporting the country's economic growth (ODCO, 2012).

2 – The fundamental logic of the capability's framework:

In the entrepreneurial world, the notion of capability is essential. It refers to the ability of an organisation, a person, a process, an application, a configuration element, or an IT service to carry out an activity (Desfray & Raymond, 2024). Anchored within each organisation, it symbolises the intrinsic competence to perform activities that are fundamental to its performance. Emerging from the fusion of resources, processes, and know-how, these capabilities guide the entity's growth and adaptability. Organisational and dynamic capabilities, in particular, stand out for their influence on competitiveness.

The dynamic capabilities framework has profoundly influenced the theory and practice of strategic management. Although many studies have addressed this subject, there has not always been consensus in the literature (Teece, 2014).

Before delving into the details of dynamic capabilities, it is crucial to lay the groundwork by understanding the overall landscape of capabilities within organisations. At its core, capability is the ability of an organisation to successfully leverage its skills and resources to achieve its objectives and meet stakeholder expectations (Douglas Horton et al., 2004). These capabilities can be categorised in various ways depending on their nature and application.

2.1 – Organisational capabilities:

The concept of organisational capability stems from the emergence of the strategic analysis paradigm. Derived from the RBV (Resource-Based View) theory, which emphasises not only external analysis of the competitive environment but also an organisation's internal resources as a source of competitive advantage. Organisational capability refers to an ability, at the organisational level, to efficiently exploit its resources and competencies to transform input factors into products and services, enabling it to hold a unique market position with a competitive advantage (Parmentier, 2023).

Organisational capabilities can be segmented into various types, as distinguished by (Parmentier, 2023), each playing a crucial role in how a company creates and maintains its competitive position. Among these, depending on their degree of complexity, we distinguish:

- **Functional capabilities:** These are specific processes related to particular areas or departments of a company, such as R&D, production, marketing, and distribution. They can be a source of competitive advantage because they are often developed in a company-specific context and can be difficult to imitate (Fortune & Mitchell, 2012).
- **Core capabilities:** C. K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel first introduced the concept of core competencies in their Harvard Business Review article titled "The Core Competence of the Corporation" (Trent, 2007). This concept centres on the unique set of skills and knowledge that a company possesses, allowing it to deliver distinct value to its customers. They argue that, to sustain a competitive advantage, companies should prioritise and develop these core competencies. As such, these 'core competencies' represent the key assets that enable a company to differentiate itself in the marketplace and deliver unparalleled value to its consumers (Govind Menon, 2008).
- **Absorptive capabilities:** These refer to a company's ability to recognise the value of new external information, assimilate it, and apply it to improve its production processes, products, and services. This involves not only acquiring new knowledge but also integrating it into the company's existing knowledge and using it to innovate and improve performance (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Absorptive capabilities are

thus a key factor for companies aiming to adapt and innovate in a constantly evolving environment (Jørgensen & Danieli, 2024).

- **Creative capabilities:** Napier and Nilsson (2006) were among the first to discuss the concept of creative capabilities within organisations. According to their definition, these capabilities manifest through routines and processes that strengthen an organisation's ability to adopt innovative behaviours and actions. Napier aligns these creative capabilities with dynamic capabilities, emphasising their role in adapting to environmental fluctuations through the effective exploitation of both internal and external skills and processes. These concepts enable organisations to become more resilient and proactive in the face of constant and dynamic changes in the business environment (Parmentier, 2023).

With a special focus on dynamic capabilities, which hold a unique place, let's take a closer look at this concept and its relevance in today's business landscape.

2.2 – Dynamic capabilities:

Since their introduction by David Teece, Gary Pisano, and Amy Shuen in their 1997 article "Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management," dynamic capabilities have been the focus of increased interest in the academic literature. However, despite this attention and numerous attempts at conceptualisation, a unified and consensual definition of the concept remains elusive. The meta-capabilities developed by (Collis, 1994) support the idea that dynamic capabilities can be considered a meta-concept³, as they allow for the development of a higher level of explanation or reflection, surpassing traditional strategic management concepts and offering a broader understanding of organisational phenomena.

In the same vein, William Ocasio, quoted by (Helfat & Finkelstein, 2007), argues that the concept of dynamic capabilities seems rather vague and lacking in any concrete dimension. He describes it as a « *slippery concept* »⁴, emphasising that there is no clearly established definition and that each researcher has their own interpretation. However, this does not necessarily mean

³ is a concept at a higher level of abstraction that groups and links together several concepts, serving as a framework for analysing complex ideas or phenomena.

⁴ is a concept that refers to an idea or term which, because of its ambiguity, is difficult to define precisely. It often escapes clear understanding and can be interpreted in multiple ways, making it tricky to conceptualise.

that the conceptualisation is flawed; rather, it reflects the intrinsic complexity and depth of the concept.

In this context, several researchers have examined the issue and attempted to shed their own light on this evolving concept.

The concept of ‘dynamic capability’ was first introduced by Teece and Pisano in 1994, where they defined it as: ‘the subset of skills/capabilities that enables the firm to create new products and processes and respond to changing market circumstances’ (Burlaud, 2022). This definition focuses on the development of new products and processes as the main dynamic capabilities. However, this perspective may appear narrow, as it does not encompass all the potential a company could mobilise in the face of market fluctuations.

Three years later, Teece, Pisano, and Shuen broadened their perspective by defining dynamic capabilities as: ‘the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments’ (Teece et al., 1997) p. 516. This definition provides a broader outlook, emphasising not only reactivity but also the proactive ability of a company to integrate, build, and reshape its competences, whether internal or external, in response to continuous environmental changes. It suggests a more comprehensive adaptability and an expanded strategic vision.

As for (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), they consider dynamic capabilities to be organisational and strategic processes that enable companies to adapt rapidly to environmental changes and develop new competitive advantages. These processes are often characterised by the creation of situation-specific knowledge, combining experiential actions for rapid learning and leveraging pre-existing knowledge while generating new perspectives on the current situation.

Another perspective enriches our understanding of the concept. According to (Helfat & Finkelstein, 2007), a dynamic capability is defined as ‘the ability of an organisation to intentionally create, extend, or modify its resource base’. This definition emphasises the flexibility and proactive ability of an organisation to manage its resources in response to changing needs or emerging opportunities. It is a means for a company to ensure its competitiveness and sustainability in a constantly changing environment.

Dynamic capabilities therefore represent a company’s agile ability to proactively identify, integrate, and reconfigure its resources and competences in response to changing market

dynamics. They encompass the detection of opportunities and threats, timely decision-making, and the reorientation of resource bases.

From this perspective, dynamic capabilities manifest across several key dimensions, including:

- **Innovation capabilities:** According to Lawson and Samson (2001), innovation capabilities refer to the ability to consistently convert knowledge and ideas into new products, processes, and systems that benefit both the organisation and its stakeholders (Terziovski, 2007). Hii and Neely (2000, p. 5) also highlight that these capabilities facilitate the creation of new ideas, the discovery of fresh market opportunities, and the execution of viable innovations by utilising existing resources and competencies (Breznik & Hisrich, 2014).

These innovation capabilities are not limited to the creation of new products or services but also encompass the continuous improvement of the organisation's internal processes and systems. They allow the company to remain competitive in a constantly changing environment by maximising the use of its existing resources while exploring new opportunities. Additionally, innovation capabilities foster a corporate culture that is open to change and experimentation, which is essential for maintaining a leading market position and responding swiftly to emerging stakeholder needs.

- **Adaptation capabilities:** refers to an organisation's ability to adjust its strategies, processes, and operations in response to changes in the external environment. It is essential for the company to remain competitive in a constantly changing market. According to (Tece, 2007), these capabilities include the detection of opportunities and threats, as well as the rapid adjustment of resources and competences to align with new market conditions. Furthermore, (Endres, 2017) describes adaptation as an organisation's ability to continuously monitor its environment, challenge its strategies, and adjust its actions in response to changes. This involves effective coordination of internal activities and a proactive approach to maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage, incorporating uncertainty and continuously reviewing decision-making and organisational processes.
- **Reconfiguration capabilities:** refer to an organisation's ability to reorganise and redeploy its resources and competences flexibly to respond to new opportunities or

challenges. (Teece, 2007) stresses that these capabilities are crucial for maintaining the company's competitiveness by enabling it to combine, protect, and, if necessary, readjust its intangible and tangible assets to adapt to changing market dynamics.

Reconfiguration capabilities enable the organisation not only to adapt to change but also to anticipate the transformations needed to remain competitive. By readjusting its intangible and tangible assets, the company can respond to current challenges while preparing for future market developments. This proactivity is essential for capitalising on emerging opportunities while minimising the risks associated with disruption. Thus, these capabilities promote organisational resilience in the face of economic and technological uncertainty.

- **Learning capabilities:** refer to an organisation's ability to acquire, interpret, and apply new knowledge to improve performance and adapt to change. This ability to integrate past experiences to enhance future practices is central to enabling teams to align their actions with continuous improvement objectives (Senge, 1990). This involves members identifying and correcting errors in existing practices while incorporating this new knowledge into the organisation's future actions (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Essential to dynamic capabilities, team learning is a collective process involving discussion, reflection, and action. Teams share information, seek feedback, and adjust their actions to improve (Edmondson, 1998).

Learning capabilities are therefore crucial for organisations to adapt and thrive in competitive environments. By integrating collective learning into their dynamic practices, organisations strengthen their ability to combine and develop specific knowledge, enabling them to maintain a competitive edge in a constantly changing context (Pluchart, 2013).

- **Networking capabilities:** refer to an organisation's ability to extend its organisational boundaries (Dyer & Singh, 1998) and to establish strategic relationships with its stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, and competitors. These capabilities are essential for knowledge exchange, acquiring critical resources, and integrating into collaborative networks. They enable the organisation to leverage external synergies, enhance its innovation potential, and strengthen its competitive position by embedding itself in global value chains. By developing

these capabilities, companies can address internal gaps and improve their flexibility in response to market changes.

In a competitive environment such as the Moroccan market, it is crucial for businesses to develop advanced networking practices and market development strategies based on reputation and the involvement of partners in value creation processes (St-Pierre et al., 2013). These capabilities are particularly important for maximising the benefits of national preference and gaining access to public contracts. By forging strong links with government bodies and other key players, local cooperatives and businesses can better integrate into local value chains, thereby increasing their chances of success in markets reserved for national actors. These strategic networks also contribute to the creation of a robust and cooperative business ecosystem, which is essential for the country's sustainable economic development.

- **Integration capabilities:** refer to an organisation's ability to effectively combine and coordinate its internal resources and competences with those of external partners. Knowledge integration involves efficiently incorporating insights into the decisions, practices, and policies of organisations and systems (CCNMO, 2008), thereby maximising the use of available assets. By aligning knowledge and technology, the organisation can strengthen its innovation potential and enhance its competitiveness in meeting the demands of both global and local markets. The integration of knowledge serves as a source of competitive advantage (Grant, 1996), enabling the organisation to establish a sustainable position in a competitive environment.

Integration capabilities are particularly important, especially for companies seeking to leverage the benefits of national preference and gain access to public contracts. By effectively integrating internal and external resources, local companies can enhance their performance and strengthen their position in national markets. This integration can become a source of competitive advantage if it allows for the exploitation of members' specific knowledge, combines different types of knowledge to increase causal ambiguity, and renews that advantage through innovation and the development of new skills (Grant, 1996). It also encourages collaboration with government bodies and contributes to the development of a sustainable and coherent economic ecosystem.

• *Table 1 : Dynamic capabilities and their impact on cooperatives.*

Dynamic Capability	Description	Impact on Cooperatives
Innovation	Ability to develop new ideas, products, or services.	Increases the competitiveness of cooperatives and their ability to meet the demands of local and international markets.
Adaptation	Ability to adjust strategies and processes in response to market and policy changes.	Strengthens cooperatives' responsiveness to changes in the regulatory and economic environment.
Learning	Ability to acquire and integrate new skills and knowledge.	Enhances the overall performance of cooperatives by improving their ability to innovate and evolve.
Ethics	Integration of responsible and transparent values in management.	Builds stakeholder trust and strengthens cooperatives' social and environmental commitment.
Networking	Ability to establish and maintain strategic relationships with partners.	Enhances synergies with other economic actors, facilitating access to markets and growth opportunities.
Integration	Ability to combine and coordinate internal and external resources.	Improves organizational efficiency and access to public markets by better integrating resources.

Source: Adapted from the theoretical framework on dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997) and absorptive capacity theory (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), with additional insights from the analysis of their application to Moroccan cooperatives within the context of the national preference policy.

3 – Context and policy framework:

Confronted with globalisation, national preference and industrial policy are emerging as two strategic levers for governments. The former seeks to increase the integration of Moroccan

engineering or know-how (CGEM, 2021), while the latter aims to promote the competitiveness, growth, and structural transformation of the national industry.

Within this framework, industrial policy plays a fundamental role in guiding Morocco's economic development. It focuses on modernising the industrial sector, improving production capacity, and encouraging innovation through various reforms and incentives. Cooperatives, by mobilising local resources and promoting economic inclusion, are key players in this approach. At the same time, national preference supports local products and services, thereby strengthening economic sovereignty and reducing external dependency. By combining these two strategies, Morocco aims to balance openness to the global market while consolidating its own skills and resources. This section explores how industrial policy and national preference complement and interact, highlighting the crucial role of cooperatives in this dynamic.

3.1 – Industrial policy and the contribution of cooperatives:

Industrial policy is defined as the state's strategic effort to encourage the development and growth of a sector of the economy (CGEM, 2021). Its main objective is to remedy the handicaps hindering the process of structural transformation by encouraging and directing private investment towards the most dynamic and complex sectors. To achieve this, various levers are activated, such as tax incentives, subsidies, loan guarantees, easier access to finance, research and development (R&D) subsidies, and training programmes (EL MOKRI, 2016).

In this quest to optimise and strengthen industry, a key concept is emerging to complement this vision: industrial sovereignty. This refers to the absence of dependence on foreign suppliers for products and machinery, particularly for so-called "strategic" products, by ensuring that industrial production facilities are located within the country to meet these needs (Bellit et al., 2020). In other words, it reflects a country's ambition to maintain control over the essential elements of its productive fabric while protecting itself from external dependencies that could prove harmful.

Industrial policy has played a key role in Morocco's economic development since the early 2000s. The Kingdom has undertaken a far-reaching transformation of its industrial fabric, aiming to diversify its economy, which has historically centred on agriculture, towards greater industrialisation. This process has crystallised around innovative, high-performance industrial ecosystems, supported by a series of strategic plans such as the Emergence Plan (2005-2009), the National Pact for Industrial Emergence (2009-2014), the Industrial Acceleration Plan (2014-

2020) (EL MOKRI, 2016), and more recently, the Industrial Recovery Plan (2021-2023). These initiatives, bolstered by reforms to improve the business climate, strengthen vocational training, and enhance the competitiveness of Morocco's industrial sector (IRES, 2014), have also been complemented by programmes such as the Green Morocco Plan, the Generation Green Plan, and the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH).

The Green Morocco Plan and the Generation Green Plan have strengthened the links between agriculture and industry by developing a competitive agri-food industry and integrating agricultural products into national and international value chains. Meanwhile, the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) has supported local development by financing cooperative projects and improving the living conditions of local communities, thereby contributing to the overall economic dynamics of the country.

The Green Morocco Plan, launched in 2008, aimed to modernise Moroccan agriculture and integrate smallholders into national and international markets (MAPM, 2014). By 2018, this plan had facilitated the creation or strengthening of around 720 agricultural cooperatives, benefiting more than 20,000 farmers (ADA, 2018). These efforts led to a significant increase in agricultural production and the incomes of cooperative members. In parallel, the Generation Green Plan, which succeeded the Green Morocco Plan, focuses on sustainability and social inclusion. It aims to create 350,000 jobs in the agricultural sector by 2030, with a particular emphasis on young people and women (National Agricultural Advisory Office, 2021). Cooperatives play a crucial role in this plan by facilitating access to resources, training, and markets for local farmers while supporting sustainability and inclusion objectives.

Regarding industry, industrial cooperatives have also had a significant impact. They have strengthened the value chain in the agri-food sector by improving product quality and diversifying supply. By focusing on the local processing of raw materials, they have enabled Morocco to maintain a competitive presence in global markets such as shellfish, with a market share of 2.7% between 2001 and 2015 (Aoufi & Billaudot, 2019).

Additionally, these cooperatives have played a key role in promoting Moroccan products, particularly in the citrus and tomato markets, where the country holds market shares of 3.3% and 3.6%, respectively. Their efforts have helped to diversify exportable products and improve the structuring of the sector, thereby facilitating access to international markets (Aoufi & Billaudot, 2019).

The National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), launched in 2005, has provided significant support for Moroccan cooperatives. Between 2005 and 2011, the total number of cooperatives nearly doubled, rising from 4,827 cooperatives with 317,289 members in December 2004 to 8,532 cooperatives with 390,622 members in July 2011. This support has enabled not only the creation of new cooperatives but also the strengthening of existing cooperatives' capacities and improved their access to markets. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the number of women's cooperatives, from 376 in 2004 to 1,102 in 2011. This momentum, supported by the INDH, has encouraged stronger integration of cooperatives into the national economy, reinforcing their central role in Morocco's economic and social development (ODCO, 2012).

Thanks to their democratic structure and local roots, cooperatives are proving to be powerful vehicles for inclusive and sustainable development. They play a key role in mobilising local resources, promoting economic inclusion, and building community resilience. By integrating cooperatives into national development strategies, Morocco ensures not only the active participation of local populations but also the implementation of a balanced and sustainable economic model. Moroccan cooperatives are therefore crucial for achieving the objectives of these programmes and fostering a transition towards a more resilient and sovereign economy. At the same time, the reforms undertaken to improve the business climate, strengthen training, and increase the competitiveness of Morocco's industrial fabric have consolidated the industry as a key driver of job creation, productive investment, and exports.

3.2 – The essence of national preference in industrial policy:

National preference is an economic policy commonly used in various countries, although its application and effects may vary according to local context. In the Moroccan context, this policy aims to give preference to local products and services, thereby helping to strengthen the national economy. According to our analysis, this policy can be regarded as a form of protectionism insofar as it primarily encourages the consumption of goods bearing the 'Made in Morocco' label and manifests in various ways, including tax incentives for local businesses, quotas in public procurement, and the introduction of customs barriers.

It is in this context that Circular No. 19/2020, issued on 25 November 2020, was introduced. This circular aims to encourage the creation of wealth and jobs in sectors with high local added value. It highlights two key measures: the first concerns a preference in public tenders granted

to national companies, cooperatives, and self-employed entrepreneurs, while the second encourages the use of Moroccan products, particularly those that are handmade or manufactured (MEFRA, 2021).

In this context, bids from foreign companies are now systematically rated lower than those from Moroccan companies, enhancing the competitiveness of Moroccan products in the national market. Dynamic capabilities play a crucial role here, enabling cooperatives to constantly innovate and improve their bids while complying with the requirement for the contract-holding company to justify the origin of the products and materials used, thereby strengthening their competitiveness in the national market (Martor et al., 2020).

The goal of examining the interactions between national preference policy and the "Made in Morocco" label, in relation to the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan cooperatives, is to shed light on their impact on local industrial competitiveness and to propose adjustments to maximise benefits. This is part of the major strategic challenge of the New Development Model, which seeks to promote a dynamic and innovative national production system capable of leveraging Morocco's sectoral potential to offer high-value-added products and services (CSMD, 2021).

The concept of "Made in Morocco" could play a significant role here. As an extension of the national preference policy, this label could serve as a strategic marketing tool for SMEs and cooperatives. It could enhance their visibility in the market, increase their attractiveness, and thus potentially boost their competitiveness. However, the effectiveness of this label heavily depends on the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan industries of all sizes to adapt and innovate.

4 - Interaction between dynamic capacities and national preference policy:

The interaction between the dynamic capabilities of cooperatives and the national preference policy is crucial for fully exploiting the opportunities offered by public policies in Morocco. This interaction enables cooperatives to proactively adjust to the requirements of the national preference policy, which seeks to support local businesses by granting them preferential access to public contracts. By integrating these dynamics, Moroccan cooperatives can not only position themselves favourably in national markets but also strengthen their resilience and long-term competitiveness while meeting growing expectations for sustainability and innovation.

4.1 – Innovation and adaptation to market requirements:

The national preference policy not only promotes compliance with current standards but also encourages innovation and adaptation. Strong dynamic capabilities enable cooperatives to respond nimbly to the requirements of this policy, reconfiguring their operations to align their products and services with the criteria specified in public tenders. Cooperatives that invest in research and development, as well as in the ongoing training of their members, can not only meet current criteria but also position themselves to seize new opportunities as public procurement requirements evolve.

Made in Morocco" features prominently in the Executive's **Nation Branding** programme (FNH, 2023), which means that cooperatives must not only adjust their production methods but also demonstrate their ability to add value to local products and actively promote them in the market. The global economic crisis of 2020, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, has underscored the need to ensure economic self-sufficiency and sovereignty, reinforcing the necessity for cooperatives to compete not only on price but also on quality and innovation. A cooperative that can quickly adjust its production methods or develop new skills in response to technical specifications imposed by a public contract will be better positioned to benefit from national preference while contributing to the goal of making "Made in Morocco" a symbol of quality and competitiveness.

4.2 - Synergy with sector plans:

Aligning the dynamic capabilities of cooperatives with the various sectoral plans, such as the Green Morocco Plan and the Generation Green Plan, is essential to maximise the benefits of the national preference policy. These sectoral plans provide a strategic framework for the development of key sectors of the Moroccan economy. Cooperatives that adapt their internal capabilities to align with the objectives of these plans are better positioned to benefit from government support and incentives. For example, an agricultural cooperative that adjusts its practices to meet the criteria of the Green Morocco Plan will not only be able to access public contracts but also receive additional support through subsidies or rural development programmes.

4.3 – Theoretical proposal: Ethics as a dynamic capacity:

As part of our research into the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan cooperatives, we propose an extension of the traditional concept of dynamic capabilities by incorporating ethics as an essential component. Although dynamic capabilities are often characterised by an

organisation's capacity to integrate, develop, and reconfigure its internal competences to adapt to changes in the environment (Teece et al., 1997), we put forward the idea that organisational ethics can also be considered a dynamic capability specific to cooperatives.

Our proposition is that ethics, beyond being a simple set of values and guiding principles, constitutes a genuine dynamic capacity that directly influences the ability of cooperatives to innovate, adapt, and reposition themselves in the markets. Indeed, ethical conduct strengthens trust and translates into a healthy working environment (PNUD, 2021), which is crucial for organisational responsiveness and agility. This theoretical proposal aims to enrich the understanding of dynamic capabilities by integrating values such as transparency, social responsibility, and integrity—not only as governance principles but also as drivers of performance and competitiveness.

Ethics, as a dynamic capability, enables Moroccan cooperatives to effectively reconfigure their resources to align with the objectives of the national preference policy. As (Treviño & Nelson, 2010) point out, an ethical culture strengthens stakeholder commitment and promotes the sustainability of responsible practices. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognise that these strategic transformation mechanisms, embodied in strong dynamic capabilities, become truly effective when supported by staff with a robust ethical mindset and commitment. A workforce aligned with shared ethical values is not only an asset to the organisation; it also becomes a driver of innovation. When fully engaged, staff members are more likely to actively contribute to research and development (R&D), bringing new ideas and perspectives that enrich the innovation process.

In the absence of an ethically aligned team, even the most powerful dynamic capabilities risk being diverted to individual ends, thereby compromising the true strategic strengths of the cooperative or any other organisation. A people-centred approach that emphasises ethics as a foundation is therefore essential to prevent the redirection of the organisation's capabilities towards personal goals while ensuring that collective efforts are directed towards achieving the cooperative's strategic objectives. Thus, it appears that other dynamic capabilities—be they innovation, adaptation, or reconfiguration—are intrinsically dependent on organisational ethics, whether at the staff or management level.

• *Table 2 : Key findings.*

Key Finding	Observed Impact
1 - Increased contribution to the local economy.	Cooperatives with dynamic capabilities better meet the goals of the national preference policy.
2 - Enhanced innovation and competitiveness.	Cooperatives innovating in products and services gain easier access to national and international markets.
3 - Effective integration of local resources.	Integration of internal and external resources allows cooperatives to better meet public market requirements.
4 - Positive impact of ethics on performance.	Cooperatives that prioritize ethics in management strengthen trust with partners and clients.
5 - Responsiveness to regulatory changes.	Agile cooperatives that adapt quickly actively participate in the implementation of the national preference policy.

Source: Based on empirical findings from the study of the interaction between the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan cooperatives and the national preference policy.

In light of the results presented above, it is clear that the dynamic capabilities of Moroccan cooperatives play a central role not only in improving their operational efficiency but also in aligning with national policies, such as the national preference policy. By leveraging innovation, adaptability, and ethical governance, these cooperatives have the potential to significantly enhance their contribution to local and national economic development. However, the real challenge lies in their ability to continually adapt their internal resources and strategies to meet the evolving demands of both national and international markets. This interplay between dynamic capabilities and industrial policy underscores the need for ongoing improvement and strategic coherence.

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted the essential role played by Moroccan cooperatives in the country's socio-economic development, particularly through their dynamic capabilities such as innovation, adaptation, learning, and ethics. These capabilities are key to implementing the national preference policy, strengthening the local industrial fabric, and contributing to Morocco's economic sovereignty.

Although the structural transformation of the Moroccan economy is often considered slow, characterised by a direct shift from an agricultural economy to a service economy without a significant phase of industrialisation (UNECA, 2018), cooperatives, by integrating innovative processes and adapting to the demands of both national and international markets, actively participate in this transformation. They support industrial development while leveraging internal resources and promoting the "Made in Morocco" label.

Indeed, ethics, as a dynamic capability, enables cooperatives to build stakeholder trust, foster a healthy working environment, and create sustainable and competitive products (Treviño & Nelson, 2010). This ethical foundation strengthens the resilience of cooperatives and ensures their ability to meet growing market demands in a responsible and innovative way.

These results also open up interesting perspectives for policymakers, who could enhance support policies for Moroccan cooperatives, particularly by adapting the instruments of the national preference policy to maximize their impact on the country's industrial development. Furthermore, future research could explore the long-term impact of dynamic capabilities on the resilience of cooperatives in the face of economic crises, as well as conduct international comparative studies to better understand Moroccan specificities in a global context. Such investigations would help refine national strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the "Made in Morocco" label.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the contribution of cooperatives to establishing a sovereign industry depends not only on their internal capabilities but also on their ability to collaborate with public and private actors, use new technologies, and integrate into global value chains. This strategic approach is crucial to guaranteeing their competitiveness and ensuring long-term sustainable growth.

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