



Spreading the gains from geographical indications: A longitudinal study on the extension of the Prosecco GI[☆]

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Geographical indications
Expansion
Wine regions
Management
Governance

ABSTRACT

Defined as signs denoting products linked to discrete characteristics of an area, geographical indications (GIs) acquired prominence in the economic development agenda. Gains from GIs triggered processes of redefinition and extension of the underlying territorial boundaries. Extensions increased the number of beneficiaries of the returns from GIs but also ignited tensions that deserve to be observed to distil theoretical insights on the evolution of indications and actionable guidelines for practitioners and policymakers. This study investigates the processes governing the settlement of tensions after the extension of a GI and attempts at understanding how contestations among incumbents and newcomers can be managed. Through a retrospective longitudinal analysis of the Prosecco extension, we find that incumbents and newcomers clashed based on different visions of the GI. Three elements allowed the management of tensions: political agency, the design of governance mechanisms, and a territorial portfolio strategy.

1. Introduction

Geographical indications (GIs henceforth) triggered growth in the agri-food sector and boosted the economies of rural areas and regions (Crescenzi et al., 2022). GIs are signs that «identify products linked to a specific region and which protect against misappropriation» (Bienabe et al., 2013, p. 54). They «identify a good as originating in the territory of a member [country] or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation, or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin» (WTO, 1994). These signs go beyond being “labels”, similar to trademarks. They blend tangible and intangible qualities derived from an area’s physical characteristics and its history and culture (Rinaldi, 2017). GIs emerge from, and thrive thanks to, collective efforts: local communities and value chains share a «common vision concerning the quality of the product and specific characteristics of its production process» (Belletti et al., 2017, p. 46).

The interest in GIs stems from their desirable economic implications. The higher value added generated by GIs *vis-à-vis* generic products remunerates rural labour, land, and capital and makes new investments possible (Castaldi and Mendonça, 2022; Charters and Spielmann, 2014). By providing foodstuffs with distinctive positionings, GIs appeal to the

preferences of discerning consumers willing to pay a premium price. Additional revenues can be invested in the regeneration, renewal, and improvement of the factors sustaining GI distinctiveness: human capital, production processes, and quality control (Belletti et al., 2017; Belderbos et al., 2022). Recent literature discusses the positive role of GIs as policy tools in rural areas in developing countries. Distressed or marginal locales in developed and developing economies alike might leverage GIs to oppose the de-spatialisation and homogenisation caused by globalisation and their negative economic consequences (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2020). In particular, GIs help rural areas position their products in lucrative markets, countering the disproportionate power of international retailers, distributors, and manufacturers in global value chains (Mancini, 2013; Stranieri et al., 2023).

Our paper delves into the relationship between GIs and economic development and moves from one consideration: a GI can upgrade a rural area’s ability to capture value while making the surrounding zones worse off (Mancini, 2013). As a result, inclusion and exclusion criteria can change over time: “outsiders” can reclaim their belonging to the GI based on competences, histories, and production practices. Historically, this has been the case for the extension of wine GIs documented in Meloni and Swinnen’s (2018) study on Champagne, Porto, and Chianti.

[☆] The author wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their thorough analysis and critique of the early version of the manuscript and would like in particular to thank reviewer 2 for his/her invaluable contribution to the central argument of the paper.

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Extending the boundaries of a GI might cause tensions between insiders and newcomers, a fact that has received scant attention in the extant literature. An extension includes hitherto excluded areas and distributes the wealth created to a greater number of producers. It might create tensions between communities, groups of firms and institutional actors. To the best of our knowledge, few studies have documented whether tensions between former insiders and newcomers persist after an extension and how they can be managed. This study addresses this gap by examining the social dynamics ensuing from extending a GI and from the opposing visions borne by different actors.

We contribute to the GI debate by illustrating the results of a longitudinal, retrospective analysis of the frictions emerging from the 2009 enlargement of the Prosecco GI, originally recognised for a small rural area in 1969 and now including nine provinces in two regions in Northeast Italy. Our study tackles the following research questions: how do divergent visions between incumbents and new entrants emerge and evolve after extending a GI? How can tensions be managed in an extended GI?

Prosecco is a critical case. It is one of the fastest-growing GIs in Europe, and its impact on the local economy has been relevant in terms of revenues, stimulus to firm creation, and farm renovation. It is one of the most recent GI enlargements that has resulted in many tensions and diverging perspectives. We contribute to the literature on GI extensions (Meloni and Swinnen 2018) by identifying the origins of these tensions and documenting the interplay among actors in contests over the nature, identity, and boundaries of the GI. We also find how contests among opposing views held by individual actors and groups can be managed, offering insights for further research on GI amendment and transformation.

1.1. Literature review: GIs and their extensions

GIs designate products from a region whose physical and sociocultural characteristics load them with distinctive qualities. A zone's physical features, biodiversity, and microclimatic conditions impact the organoleptic profile of food. Moreover, culture and traditions symbolically connote the product: production methods and local communities' material cultures, producers' *savoir-faire*, and the entanglement of local history and production methods are relevant components of a GI's intangible value (D'Amico, 2004). Thus, a GI safeguards and carries to consumers a bundle of material and immaterial elements that certify the uniqueness of food.

A GI can transform locales and their firms. Producers can differentiate products from standard commodities and aim at higher price points and margins (Belletti et al., 2017). This translates into higher remuneration for rural labour, land, and capital. Furthermore, GIs help consumers: they reduce information asymmetries and provide reassurance on quality, authenticity, and provenance (Meloni et al., 2019). They benefit territories and communities more generally. In their analysis of Italian wine GIs, Crescenzi et al. (2022) showed that the formal recognition of a GI favours local economic development in two ways. First, it contributes to retaining the population, a vital outcome for rural areas that often risk depopulation (see also Johnson and Lichter, 2019). Second, while the appellation supports the development of the wine sector, it is associated with the consolidation of ancillary and complementary sectors.

Gains from GIs depend on the compliance with product regulations elaborated by governing bodies (e.g. consortia or associations of producers). They materialise thanks to sustained collective stewardship of the resources—tangible and intangible, collective and private—that confer distinction to the products of a locale. Bienabe et al. (2013) described a GI as a «tireless collective value addition and inclusive strategies for protecting the collective reputation» (p. 54). When GI products possess a strong collective reputation, they also become instruments to signal quality to global markets (Bramley and Bienabe, 2012). In essence, appellations generate wealth and opportunities. They

do so by excluding producers, institutions, and zones (Bowen, 2010) on the basis of location and lack of compliance with regulations. While GIs' boundaries are physically determined, literature documents that they evolve and can change because of tensions and conflicts among those who are "in" (producers, rural and local communities) and those who remain "out" but claim they belong to the GI (Bowen and Zapata 2009).

There is limited literature on the extension of GIs, but it opens promising research directions. The monopoly rights granted to actors included in a GI generate pressure for inclusion by neighbouring firms and areas. Cases of expansions and restrictions of the boundaries are present in the literature on wine designations (Meloni and Swinnen, 2018). Chianti, Porto, Champagne, and Burgundy are the most renowned cases wherein the right to use a sign and rigidly defined boundaries were amended, revealing the dynamic nature of GIs. Four main reasons explain their evolution and enlargement, according to the authors. First, changes in power structures might subvert the relative power of given stakeholders over others in a locale, as in the dispute between Florentine and Siene families over the delineation of Chianti. Second, changes in the «dominant philosophy» (Meloni and Swinnen, 2018, p. 15) of an age can determine the enlargement of a GI: the mainstreaming of certain ideologies can influence decisions on economic matters in a period, as, for instance, in the dialectics between promarket *vis-à-vis* protectionist stances. Third, changes in infrastructure—e.g., new roads or railroads connecting hitherto disconnected regions—might modify the relative position of a territory and its firms: former outsiders can become winners because of privileged access to infrastructure. Thus, they might force insiders to revise the boundaries of a GI to avoid losing commercial opportunities. Lastly, changes in demand might push for an increase or decrease in the volume of a production area, hence requiring the redefinition of its extension to match market growth of compressions.

Few studies in the literature, to our knowledge and others' (Rinallo and Pitardi, 2019), have delved into the dynamics of the extension of GIs, shedding light on the underlying agency, interactions, and tensions. Meloni and Swinnen (2018) and Ferrari (2014) are two notable exceptions, with the latter focusing on the internal diatribes in the Amarone wine delineation and on the dialogical opposition between proponents of a quality-based definition of the boundaries of the GI and those concerned with production volumes. More importantly, previous literature did not concentrate on how the tensions predating an extension reverberate on the evolution of an indication. There are several grounds for conflicts among parties after a redefinition of boundaries. First, it increases the number of recipients of the wealth generated by the GI benefitting firms in zones excluded in the past. Second, being also a concession to economies of scale, an extension might be perceived as a threat to the identity of the locale, to the intangible assets conveying ideas of scarcity, uniqueness, and quality. From this viewpoint, the enlargement of a GI creates a paradoxical situation that requires sound management by actors and stakeholders. A tradeoff has to be managed between the conditions justifying the perceived uniqueness of products commanding higher prices on the one hand and production and commercial logics that could contradict the very idea of distinctiveness on the other. A parallel can be made with the conventionalisation debate on organic farming (Buck et al., 1997; Rover et al., 2020). A model characterised by its emphasis on sustainability resulting from small-scale farms, chemical-free production aimed at local markets became so successful that large producers and retailers entered the field and enlarged its addressable market. This expansion threatens to dilute organic farming's original values (Hall and Mogyorody, 2001).

1.2. Identifying and analysing tensions in an extended GI: A framing lens

Redefining the boundaries of a GI is a process of legitimisation of a new mesh of collective identities and histories, market imperatives, opportunities, local physical features, and measurable aspects of production processes (Maressotti et al., 2020; Rinallo and Pitardi 2019; Barham,

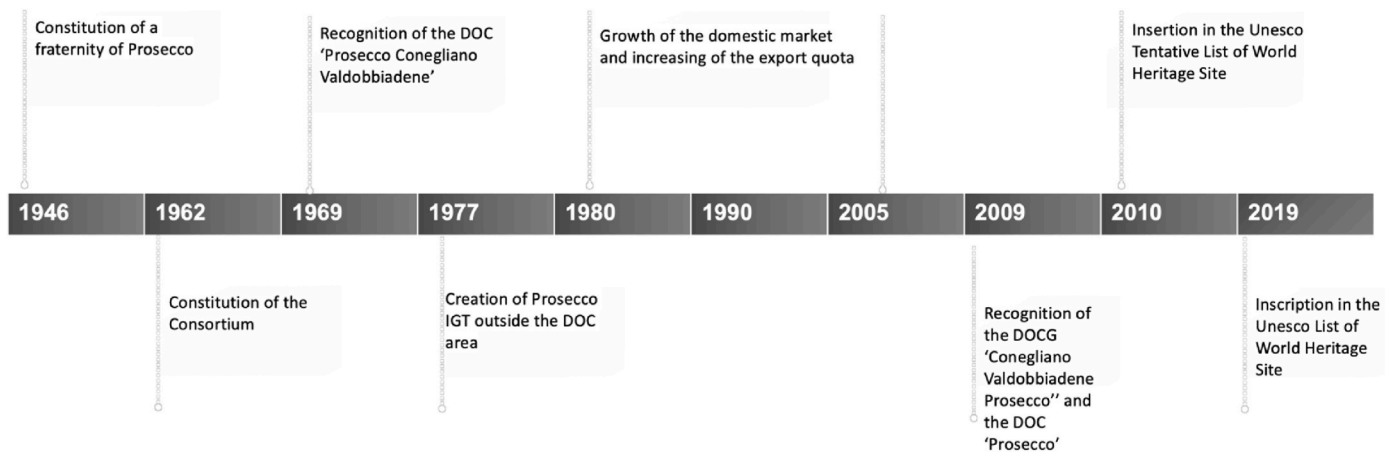


Fig. 1. Timeline of the key events of the Prosecco GI.
Source: authors' elaboration

2003). When a GI is amended, the underlying consensus produced among participants is under pressure. Pre-existing tensions could re-emerge in response to changes that offer the opportunity to some actors to test the state of things and to renegotiate it in their favour (Rinallo and Pitardi, 2019). For a GI to not be compromised, solutions to manage these tensions are required. As Barham states, different assumptions and world views might converge towards shared justifications (p. 130), «fundamental cognitive act(s) that serve to produce lasting agreements among social actors and ultimately maintain order». These claims resonate with the discourse on cognitive frames in organisational studies and in social movement scholarship (Snow and Benford, 1992; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014). Frames are cognitive structures that support actors in interpreting uncertain situations, making decisions, and acting strategically. More specifically, a cognitive frame is a «meaning structure that organises social and cultural experiences across a general area of activity» (Cornelissen and Werner, 2014, p.556). Frames have a diagnostic (making sense of a situation) and a prognostic function (acting according to the values used to make sense of the world) (Goffman 1974; Moretti and Zirpoli, 2016). These structures and the rhetoric they inform appeal to emotions that might motivate others to act (Raffaelli et al., 2019; Snow and Benford, 1992).

Our study assumes that managing tensions in an extended GI requires the identification of cognitive frames that inform the utterances and actions of diverse individuals and groups: former insiders, newcomers, and their allies. More importantly, how these opposing views interact, change in response to clashes, and are reformulated by actors to preempt contestants' intentions needs to be analysed. In this way, researchers can determine how the interaction among world views influences how a GI evolves and how equilibria between contestants emerge.

Our analytical posture and methodological choices stem from two assumptions derived from the extant literature on GIs. First, rather than being stable arrangements, GIs represent delicate equilibria that crystallise an accord reached by contending parties (e.g., newcomers and former insiders). Uncertainty, changes in the environment, opportunities, and shocks might re-ignite latent tensions and offer actors the opportunity to act strategically to pursue individual or group interests. How such contentions will be dealt with and settled will give way to novel, momentary equilibria in the social and institutional arrangements of a GI. Second, we assume that the reciprocal interaction between individual actors or groups in an extended GI is a political process guided by how their definition of the situation at hand guides their actions.

We frame the life of an extended GI as sustained by an equilibrium between actors with different interests, world views, and agendas, whose tensions are momentarily soothed and remain latent. When change materialises, actors might take advantage of it to overthrow

equilibria. How they act depends on how they make sense of the changes and the uncertainty they bring about. Moreover, one group's agenda might prevail over others based on how they succeed in mobilising allies who buy into their frames and proposed actions. Our stance is indebted to theories of managerial cognition, which state that actors adopt cognitive frames to make sense of ambiguity generated by change and consequently make strategic choices (Walsh, 1995; Kaplan, 2008). In complex social settings, agendas might differ, interpretations of change might diverge, and the future can become a matter of contention among opposing parties. Contests among opponents are informed by the actions they undertake after defining change and ambiguity according to their cognitive frames (Benford and Snow, 2000).

This paper conceives the processes of geographical delimitation (extension) and the ensuing assemblage of the symbols accruing to the identity of a GI as the outcome of contests among individuals and groups with different agendas and understandings (Kaplan, 2008). Frames inform the discourses actors elaborate to coalesce consensus and mobilise supporters in their favour (Cornelissen and Werner, 2014; Benford and Snow, 2000; Kaplan, 2008). We propose to analyse a GI's evolution focusing on the frames that different actors and groups advocate. Moreover, this study focuses on solutions to such contests that produce stability.

The qualitative evidence collected in our study was dealt with using an analytic framework that captured the essential features of frames, how they emerge, how they are strategically used, and how they change (Snihur et al., 2022). The framework builds on the following elements.

- Framing contents. A frame might be expressed in various modes (written, verbal, visual), through different uses of language (related to expressive characteristics such as figurative, abstract, ambiguous, metaphors, and analogies), and with selective emphasis (related to the focus of attention the frame aims at promoting public interest, novelty, leadership, use of culture and traditions and histories).
- Framing processes. The act of disseminating a frame entails different strategies, actions, and conducts. Frames and ensuing actions can create contestations whenever alternative frames are enacted by opposing actors or groups that respond strategically.
- Framing outcomes. Every actor in a dialectic situation where competing interests clash aims at legitimising his or her vision of the world. Contests are solved whenever either a frame prevails over the other, or when an integration of competing frames emerges. Stability is not eternal: tensions might reignite and contests restart. Our framework aims at capturing actors, actions, and tools to manage and solve contests.

Table 1
Comparing European and Italian classifications with the Prosecco appellations.

European classification (since 2008)	Italian classification	Prosecco Appellation		
		From 1969 to 1977	From 1977 to 2009	Since 2009
PDO	DOCG DOC	Prosecco Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOC	Prosecco Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOC Prosecco TGI	Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco DOCG Prosecco DOC
PGI Varietal wines Generic wines	TGI Table wines			

Source: authors' elaboration

2. Materials and methods

We opted for a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Yin, 2009) to maximise information, build thick descriptions of phenomena and delve into actors' perceptions and perspectives. The evolution of the Prosecco GI provides a deep and articulated instance of the dynamics behind an extension. First, Prosecco is one of the largest wine GI in Europe, both geographically and in terms of production volumes. The GI is interesting for its relentless 20-year market growth. Prosecco's commercial success is significant: it intensifies the tensions and conflicts between former outsiders and original insiders for obvious distributional reasons (who captures the wealth) and for fears that an excessive emphasis on commercial growth could compromise the identity of the GI. Second, Prosecco is a recent case of GI extension. The timeframe of the process is significant for theory-oriented analyses: the 2009 expansion of this GI unfolded in a social, economic, and political context that is more complex than those surrounding previous expansions (e.g.: those in Meloni and Swinnen, 2018). Prosecco's extension, given the timing, might be more significant for other locales considering to redefine the area of a promising GI in a world that differs radically from that of 60 years ago. Third, the authors had access to plenty of key informants, monitored the tensions in the GI for a long time, and tracked its evolution since its extension.

Relative to data collection, our choices stemmed from our research questions and the analytic framework. We captured and compared the "frames" used by actors to inform their actions. Data collection relied on semi-structured interviews with key informants (producers and institutional representatives) in the PDO (Appendix 1) and on the systematisation of data from secondary and archival records (e.g., newspaper and magazine articles, documents available on the consortia websites, and various other sources). The first wave of data collection consisted of a systematic organisation of secondary data and archival material. This led to a structured timeline of the evolving GI, a map of the major events in Prosecco history, and a comprehensive list of the crucial actors and stakeholders (Fig. 1). The authors identified critical moments in the timeline and a list of informants to interrogate. We approached the interviewees with a semi-structured set of questions to elicit the informants' frames and world views; we started with a clear list of themes and a script to guide the conversations. We used it as a checklist to decide when an interview reached thematic saturation. In a typical interview, informants illustrated their perspectives and those of their organisations on Prosecco, the market, and the GI. Then, they provided individual reconstructions and interpretations of key events. Concluding questions aimed to elicit their perspectives on the relations between incumbents, new entrants, and on the decisions taken by institutional and private actors across the GI.

The authors recorded the interviews, transcribed, and thematically analysed them (Clarke et al., 2015; Gioia et al., 2013). Each author coded a share of the interviews and archival materials. In regular meetings they compared the categories emerging from their analyses of the evidence. The process was iterative: meetings among the authors spurred novel questions that required the interrogation of informants and secondary data. The iterative nature of the fieldwork required the

inclusion of additional informants in the following waves. Each wave of interviews led to codes and overarching themes underpinning the actors' frames. We interviewed informants across the three different Prosecco-producing areas between January and September 2022. Respondents were institutional informants (II)—directors, former directors, and presidents of the three consortia and relevant associations—and company informants (CI) in different areas. Appendix 1 summarises the anonymised informant data showing the type of informant (institutional or company) and the producing area (DOC; DOCG; Asolo DOCG). We aimed for knowledgeable individuals searching for the highest variety possible of organisational, institutional, and territorial characteristics. The theoretical framework illustrated in the previous section guided the search for data and their analysis.

3. Background and context

Policies introduced in the early twentieth century in France form the basis of the EU's wine policy, which is regulated under the Common Market Organisation (CMO) for wine (Meloni et al., 2019). Before 2008, national governments regulated GI recognitions; the CMO reform in 2008 (EU Reg. 479/2008 Art. 34) transferred such prerogatives to the European Union (EU Reg. 479/2008 Art. 34) (Alston and Gaeta, 2021). The CMO reform introduced a uniform European framework for GIs.

The EU GI system divides wines into those with and without a GI (e.g., table wine). European regulations classify wines into two sub-categories (Regulation no 115/2012).

- Protected Designation of Origin (PDO): it identifies products produced, processed, and prepared in a specific geographical area. Natural and human factors of the territory are «often responsible for their differentiated quality. For a PDO, 100% of the grapes must originate from the limited territory and all the production of the wine occurs in that area» (Federdoc, 2024).
- Protected Geographical Indication (PGI): it indicates the name «used to designate a product originating in a specific place, region or, in exceptional cases, a country, for which a certain quality, reputation, or other characteristics are attributable to its geographical origin. At least 85% of the grapes that are used to make these wines come from this geographical area» (Federdoc, 2024).

The European regulatory framework allows member states to use «different national acronyms to preserve the traditional nomenclature» (Alston and Gaeta, 2021, p. 223) existing before the CMO reform in 2008. Italy articulates the European PDO in two categories: the Controlled Designation of Origin (Denominazione di Origine Controllata-DOC) and the Controlled and Guaranteed Designation of Origin (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita - DOCG). The latter designates wines of the highest quality, requiring producers to follow stricter rules than those of DOC products (Crescenzi et al., 2022). In addition, geography comes back and articulates the picture: within the DOC and DOCG appellations, Italian wines are classified according to different sub-areas within a GI (as in Chianti Classico within Chianti) (Alston and Gaeta, 2021).

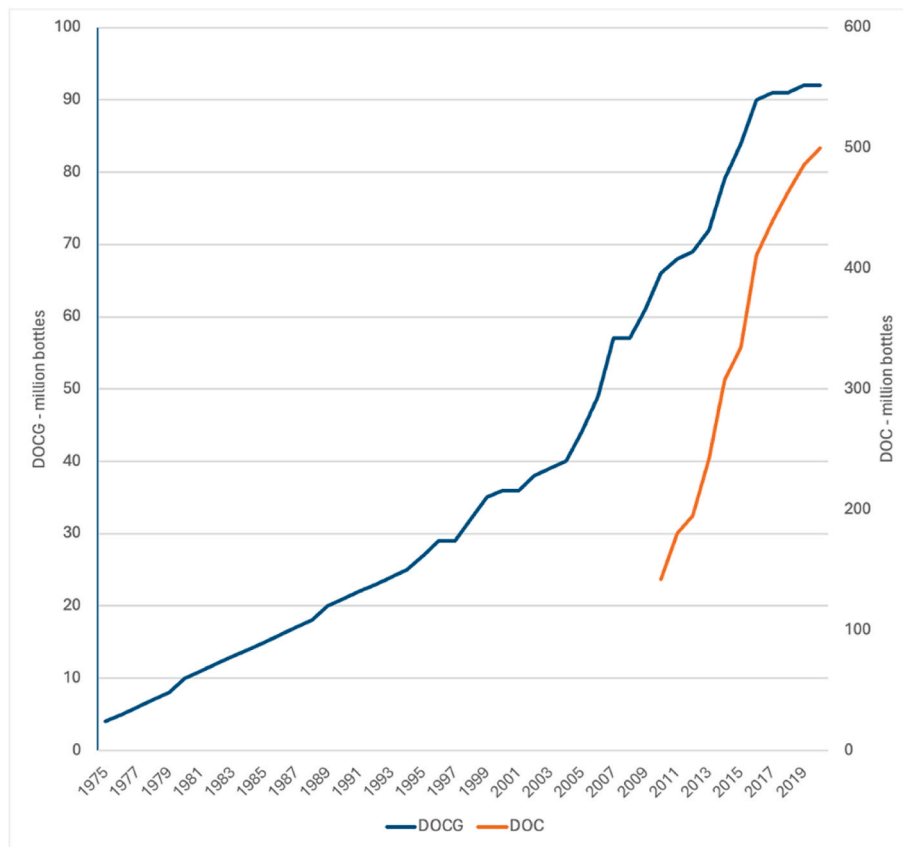


Fig. 2. Valdobbiadene Conegliano DCG and Prosecco DOC: evolution of bottle sales (1975–2019).

Source: authors' elaboration based on Conegliano Valdobbiadene DCG Consortium Economic Report (2021), *I numeri del vino* (2021) and Barisan (2010).



Fig. 3. Prosecco producing areas.

Source: authors' elaboration

Table 1 shows the correspondence between Italian and European appellations and the different Prosecco appellations. The Prosecco GI's story unfolded through several events over the past 70 years. Known since the aftermath of World War 2, it first became a DOC in 1969 when

it included only the traditional production territory of Valdobbiadene and Conegliano, in one province of the Veneto region. Until the early 1980s, Prosecco was known around the region (Veneto). Starting in the early 1990s, the product became more popular; in the second half of the

decade, exports grew significantly. Since 2005, the international demand for Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco has increased visibly and in parallel, volumes in Italy soared (Fig. 2).

The Prosecco GI was extended in 2009 by a decree of the Italian Government that enlarged its area to include new provinces in Veneto and the neighbouring region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG). The expansion brought to the recognition of two types of Prosecco PDO wines: a DOCG corresponding to the original DOC of Conegliano Valdobbiadene and a DOC corresponding to the rest of the GI. Prosecco DOCG results from production on the hills, where grapes are harvested manually with a lower yield and higher production costs. Prosecco DOC is produced in plain areas. There, grapes are mechanically harvested, and thus yields are higher per unit of land, while costs are lower than in the DOCG. Fig. 3 shows the historical producing areas of Valdobbiadene Conegliano and Asolo (black) and the DOC-producing area (dark grey).

Prosecco is the highest-selling PDO wine in Italy. The wine is a global commercial success (total sales in 2020 peaked at over 500 million bottles and 750 million in 2021). The production area grew from 7000 ha in 15 municipalities of the Veneto region to 25,000 ha in over 600 municipalities in the two regions. Many small firms were created and prospered, populating an inclusive and thriving regional economy. While large firms exist and are important, the GI comprises small- and medium-sized firms involving 11,000 families. The average cultivated land is 2 ha each. Together with growth and commercial success, critical views emerged. They expose the environmental and social risks associated with monoculture and large-scale production (Basso, 2019; Ponte, 2021). These risks have become central in the recent strategies of the three consortia in the GI (Informatore Agrario, 2021).

The extension of the GI had diverse determinants that fit the picture painted by Meloni and Swinnen in their account of previous extensions involving historical wine GIs. First, changes in demand were crucial. One reason for Prosecco's success is its capacity to address current consumers' tastes that prefer "easy" and light wines, less expensive than the traditional category leaders (e.g. Champagne) (Ponte, 2021). The growth in Prosecco sales in Italy and abroad before the expansion (Fig. 2) manifested an opportunity: enlarging the GI and increasing production volumes to exploit the evolving tastes of global demand. Extending the production area surfaced as a viable way to chase demand surges.

Power structures were important factors behind the extension of the GI. The 2008 CMO reform, elaborated by European institutions to rationalise the market, presented a challenge to the original production area. Recognising a GI requires the coincidence between the wine and the name of the production area (as for Champagne). History helped in this sense: the town named Prosecco is in Friuli Venezia Giulia, a region where the cultivation of Glera (the grape used for the wine) was common well before the 18th century (Acanti, 1754). History, geography, and toponym, in other words, had to coincide under the penalty of the cancellation of the increasingly successful "brand". Not taking action would have exposed Prosecco to the same fate as the Friulian Tocai, which had to be renamed after the Italian Constitutional Court declared its use of the toponym illegitimate because Tokaj is a Hungarian wine-making region (Rauseo, 2009).

The redesign of the extension and boundaries of the area resulted from the actions of key figures moving in the political arena, either directly or through lobbying. First, the association of farmers in Treviso (Coldiretti) advocated for the enlargement: they voiced the interests of their associates to seize the opportunity offered by an expanding market. Moreover, they stated that farmers in the plains were planting Glera and making wine through the same methods used by the producers in the hills; only harvesting practices were different because they were mechanised in the plains. In the political dimension, the Italian Minister for Agriculture, Luca Zaia, a former Regional administrator and politician, was key in escalating the process to the national dimension first and to the PDO protected by the EU law afterwards (Il Post, 2023). As a minister, he rapidly understood the challenges brought by the 2008 and

Table 2

The original Frame: Prosecco from inception to 2009 (pre-expansion).

FRAME CONTENTS (Language (Figurative, Abstract, metaphors, analogies)	FRAMING PROCESSES - Deployment of the frame (actions, initiatives, tools)
<p>The DNA: 1946 - 1970s</p> <p><i>Quality - Analogies with prestigious GIs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elevation (analogy with Champagne) ● Creation of sub-zones (e.g. Cartizze and later, in the 2000s, the Rive) <p><i>Stewardship to the hills and their communities/Commitment to the common good</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recovery of tradition (vineyards; production methods such as Charmat-Martinotti and processes; winemakers' tradition oenological School of Conegliano) ● Cultural elevation (production and consumption) ● Wine as a tool to support the recovery and the promotion of the whole territory. ● Focus on the "common good", no promotion of individual Prosecco wineries, but of the whole Prosecco territory (Conegliano Valdobbiadene fraternity approach). <p><i>Affordable quality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Versatile wine compared and generous grapes ● Affordable quality (due to its production methods, Charmat Martinotti) <p><i>Limited (commercial) vision</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fraternity of Conegliano Valdobbiadene as a closed club, hard to access, and custodian of the values of the regenerated area. ● The vision of the fraternity and its members is to promote Prosecco as a territory, rather than focusing on single producers. <p>1970s-1990s</p>	<p><i>Creation of formal institutions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prosecco fraternity (after delineation called Valdobbiadene Conegliano fraternity) was founded in 1946. ● Conegliano Valdobbiadene Consortium founded in 1962. ● Prosecco DOC GI encompassing the Valdobbiadene Conegliano area obtained in 1969. <p><i>Strengthening research and training</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reactivation of the oenological School of Conegliano, and adaptation to improve the Charmat-Martinotti method for the Glera grape. ● Foundation of CIRVE (2005): Interdepartmental research centre in viticulture and oenology at the University of Padova, based in Conegliano. ● Foundation of CREA-VE (1967, an evolution of previous research center), a research organisation focusing on viticulture and oenology based in Conegliano. <p><i>Sanctions and rewards</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Control plans on the GIs were adopted voluntarily by the Conegliano Valdobbiadene consortium in 2005; it became compulsory in 2009. <p><i>Everyday wine, whole meal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creation of a Brut Prosecco <p><i>Reaching international markets</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participation in international competition ● First contacts with wine merchants <p><i>Matching increasing demand, educating consumers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prosecco IGT in the close provinces as an "entry wine". <p><i>Structured initiatives of marketing and promotion of the territory and the product</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strada del Vino Bianco (white wine route) was inaugurated in 1966 and developed later: the first Italian wine route. In 2003 it became Strada del Prosecco and wines of Conegliano Valdobbiadene Hills. ● Special bottle for the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOC made by the fraternity.

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

FRAME CONTENTS (Language (Figurative, Abstract, metaphors, analogies))	FRAMING PROCESSES - Deployment of the frame (actions, initiatives, tools)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vino in Villa (Wine in Villa) event (1997–1998) and Primavera del Prosecco (since 1999). ● Competition event created by the fraternity among Prosecco producers to select the best Prosecco.

Source: authors' elaboration

CMO reform and pushed for the extension of the GI coordinating the efforts of farmers' associations and local authorities.

Technology played an important role in providing a rationale for the extension. Meloni and Swinnen (2018) refer to logistic infrastructure (e. g., new train connections). In our study, production technologies and methods in the winemaking process were the focal technologies justifying the extension. Prosecco's "light and fresh taste" and affordable price point are two key factors behind its success among consumers. Both depend on the wine's specific production process based on the Charmat/Martinotti method of fermentation in autoclaves. This method allows sparkling wines to be ready in a matter of months as opposed to the long periods required by the classic method, and enlarges the scale of production.

The overall political climate in Italy and Europe was another important driver of the extension. Since the 1990s, political discourse in Italy has considered food and wine as important harbingers of national identity (Grandi, 2018). Moreover, typical foodstuffs are seen as crucial for the country's competitiveness, given their export potential shared with fashion, light mechanics, and furniture/design. Protecting these "typical" items to see them promoted and sold to the world became a central tenet of the economic policy agenda, given the delay Italy had in developing more innovative and technology-oriented industries (Grandi, 2018; Fortis and Sartori, 2016).

4. Findings: framing contests in the Prosecco GI

Our presentation of findings is organised in four sections. The first exposes the frame and framing processes that trace back to the GI's inception. The second section presents the frame that emerged after the extension. The third section illustrates the most visible points of contention between the two visions, while the fourth focuses on how contests were managed.

The DNA of the GI: the frame in the early years (1946–2009)

Secondary sources and interviews allowed us to reconstruct the core contents of the "original" frame emerging among the pioneering producers of Prosecco in the early years of the original PDO. Some elementary units of meaning recurred in the contents of the period and the transcripts of interviews. Similar to the nucleotides of DNA, they conveyed the genetic information of Prosecco GI. The original frame emphasises viticulture and wine production as stewardship of the territory and the community, attention to quality in production, prudence in promotion and commercialisation, the recovery of tradition (Table 2).

Viticulture and wine production as stewardship of the hills of Valdobbiadene and their communities are present in the historical accounts of the early producers in the immediate aftermath of WW2. They also emerge from the metaphors used in interviews by current producers. In the biography of the pioneering figure Giuliano Bortolomiol (Gobbato, 2009), several passages report the abandonment of the hills during the war. Men went to the front and left the fields uncultivated. Many did not return after the war: they settled in close villages and cities offering employment. A handful of young men returned to exploit their past training in viticulture and oenology to reconstruct the wine culture of the place (Gobbato, 2009). «One thousand two hundred hectares of

vineyards were destroyed or seriously damaged. We asked ourselves: why don't we wine technicians get together and help the viticulturists?» (Gobbato, 2009, p.33).

The necessity to return to viticulture and the commitment to ambitious goals in terms of quality emerged across the board in the empirical material. One current producer whose family started making wine in the 1940s used the word «elevation» (pronounced in French) not to denote altitude but to describe the high quality of wine and Champagne in particular. The analogy with Champagne returned frequently in our interviews. References to Burgundy were also abundant. Quality was also denoted by the recurring mentions of the importance of technical skills and of the fact that the Charmat-Martinotti method was perfected in the oenological school of Conegliano.

Table 2 summarises other themes emerging from interviews that allowed us to identify the content of the original frame, such as the awareness of the importance of economic accessibility for diffusion of the wine. Prudence in marketing and commercialisation emerged in interviews and archives that reported the producers' agreement on collective promotion as more important than that of the single wine brand.

Frames, according to the lenses we used, are deployed in actions to connect understandings of a situation with some outcomes. Table 2 shows the more salient actions associated with the original frame. Some outcomes we identified came into existence in later periods (such as the creation of Cirve research center or the voluntary control plans adopted in the 2000s) but are clear expressions of the original frame. A first example is the constitution of a fraternity of Prosecco in 1946 (still existing) acting as the guardian of the core values of the GI. The oenological school was reopened in the 1960s. A consortium was founded in 1962 and obtained PDO recognition in 1969. The inauguration of two other research centres signals the importance of research as a lever to elevate quality (Crea in 1967, Cirve, later, in 2005). Producers agreed on imposing annual limitations on the quantity produced and sanctions for those who promoted their brands without connection to the territory.

While the main traits of the frame still persist, some additional elements became visible as Prosecco garnered attention and favour in the domestic and international market in the period 1970–1990. First, various interviews reported the realisation that an "easy", affordable sparkling wine was met with favour by ever-increasing market segments. In 1967, Giuliano Bortolomiol's Prosecco won the gold medal at Montpellier's Concours International de Degustation, a success that opened the first export opportunities. Foreigners started asking for the wine: «One day [in 1970], an American guy showed up. [...] He was a wine merchant and had heard about Prosecco. [...] He ordered some and today I export thirty thousand bottles a year to the United States» (Gobbato, 2009, p.55).

Other actions signal the evolution of the frame. For instance, during the 1970s, Prosecco producers worked on the development of a Brut version of a wine that was naturally sweet. Such endeavours indicate producers' aim to capitalise on consumers' enthusiastic reception: they wanted to multiply the occasions to drink Prosecco, not only during festivities and at the dessert time but also during regular meals. The affordability of the wine, then, is considered as a positive driver of dissemination of the product and the local culture: «There are no good sparkling wines in that price range except maybe Cava. Therefore, Prosecco offers a recognisable taste at an affordable price» (CI6DOC). Already in the end of the 1970s such sensitivity to demand was present and brought to the development of a Prosecco IGT wine in the plains, one that did not possess the quality sanctioned by the PDO product regulations but allowed to consolidate the familiarity of the Italian market with the GI.

Versioning the genetic code: the "commercial" frame after 2009.

In 2009, the GI was extended to today's area, encompassing two regions and nine provinces. The PDO was articulated in sub-GIs: Prosecco DOCG for the original area of the hills and a second area close to it

Table 3
The “commercial frame, post-2009.

FRAME CONTENTS (Language (Figurative, Abstract, metaphors, analogies)	FRAMING PROCESSES - Deployment of the frame (actions, initiatives, tools)
<p><i>Competition with Champagne</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A good quality, sparkling wine that is accessible and fits the taste of younger generations. ● More competitive than Champagne in terms of bottles sold. <p><i>Well-being and economic development for the region</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prosecco is the Oil and Gas of the two regions (Qualivita, 2021); ● 11000 families involved in the phenomenon. <p><i>Innovative wine, adequate for new lifestyles</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Italian Genio campaign shows images of Italy, evoking concepts of design and art, using different Italian cities as a backdrop. ● “A perfect wine for young professionals in the most important capitals of the world” (I11DOC); ● “Easy but quality is guaranteed; the taste is controlled thanks to the method of production” (I11DOC). <p><i>DOC as the driver of commercial success, complementarity between niche (DOCG) and mass market (DOC)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Prosecco’s exponential growth started after 2009, due to the large amount of product available and thanks to the DOC’s consistent promotional activities” (I11DOC). ● “If the DOCG wants to position itself as a niche, it cannot attack new markets with 100 million bottles. In order to do so, it is necessary to have volumes” (C11DOC). “The DOCG still does not understand that with their (small) volumes, they cannot implement a strategy. As you academics teach us: if you do not have critical mass, what strategy are you going to implement?” (C16DOC). ● The Prosecco system should be thought of as a car brand, like Volkswagen has both the Touareg and Golf to address different market segments under a unique brand. (C11DOC). ● “For a GI to work, it is pivotal to have adequate communication campaigns. The DOC consortium carries out a lot of promotional activities that push our product in the market” (C11DOC). ● There is a perception that there is no real difference in taste across Prosecco brands. “We are talking about a wine that is extremely technical. The big part of the work is after the harvesting; being harvested in the plains or in the hills does not much affect the final result” (I11DOC). 	<p><i>Mass Marketing and communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Italian Genio marketing campaign ● Sponsoring popular global events related to sports or lifestyle and pop culture: Moto GP, Winter Olympics, ● Enormous communication campaigns (Moto GP; museums; Miss Italy, etc.). “Brand protection” <p><i>Constant monitoring for the misuse and misappropriation of the brand Prosecco</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legal actions in Brazil and Australia; ● 2024 campaign in the UK “This is not Prosecco” aimed at reaffirming that Prosecco can be sold only in bottles. ● Monitoring of global wine websites and e-commerce to spot misuses of Prosecco to denote sparkling white wines. <p><i>Differentiation and segmentation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prosecco Rosé.

Source: authors’ elaboration

(Asolo); Prosecco DOC for the wine produced outside of these two areas, most of it in the plains of the two regions. Three consortia were established, each one had its product regulations, budget, and promotional strategies. Some producers sit on the boards of at least two consortia (the DOC and one of the two DOCG) because they produce in all areas. Larger wineries weigh more than smaller ones on the boards since their voting rights are proportional to their production volumes.

Table 3 uses our analytical framework to isolate the contents and framing processes of the “commercial” frame emerged after 2009.

The “commercial” frame represents a mutation of the original genetic code. The original one emphasised craftsmanship, the recovery of tradition, stewardship of the hills and their communities, and elevation intended as the production of high-quality wines. This second frame does not deny them, it rather downplays them to accentuate other core values.

First is Prosecco’s innovativeness and its fit with the contemporary lifestyles of urbanite professionals, and generally of individuals searching for quality without excessive formalism. The reconstructions of the informants (especially institutional ones) of the promotional strategies and our thematic coding of the communication campaigns of the DOC stress the point. Current communication focusses on the Italian lifestyle and Made in Italy across various products and experiences represented in commercials (e.g. fashion, design, etc.). The claim used is *Italian Genio*, to recall values of the good life, creativity, leisure, and beauty without stressing the regional dimension. «For a GI to work, it is pivotal to have adequate communication campaigns. The DOC consortium carries out a lot of promotional activities that push our product into the market» (C11DOC). The DOC consortium carries out multiple communication activities, especially in mass media, and is associated with very popular events (see Table 3).

The return of the analogy with Champagne, but in a different guise, is telling. Informants of the DOC compared Prosecco with Champagne not in terms of quality but bottles sold: Prosecco surpassing Champagne in volumes sold is a way of using consumer enthusiasm as a sign of both quality and competitiveness. While the communication of the consortium makes reference to the quality of the wine, it is less associated with production methods. On the contrary, the production method is used by interviewees to state that there is no actual difference in quality between the wine of the hills and that of the plains since Prosecco is a «technological wine» (see Table 3).

Second, emphasis is placed on the role of the DOC in the economic development of the two regions. In an interview with a journalist, the President of the DOC put it effectively: «Prosecco DOC is the oil and gas of the Veneto region but it is not a business dominated by three or four large firms: it involves over 11000 families, each with 2 ha on average. We create GDP and help the entire viticulture of the region» (Calandri, 2021).

Third, the frame interprets the complementarity between the Prosecco of the hills and that of the plains as a relation where the second is mainly responsible for the success of the appellation, thanks to the volumes of production it allowed to reach, to its marketing campaigns, and to the continuous efforts the DOC dedicates to legally pursue every misuse of the word “Prosecco”. «If the DOCG wants to position itself as a niche, it cannot attack new markets with 100 million bottles. It is necessary to have volumes» (C11DOC). That volumes of the DOCG were not enough to serve the demand is a recurrent declaration in many interviews (see Table 3).

4.1. Tensions and contests

Since 2009, the GI has been one in which two frames inhabited under the common roof of the extended PDO. Tensions emerged for different reasons and around different issues. As a backdrop, the relative sizes of the consortia need to be considered: the DOC sold 616 million bottles in 2023, the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG sold 100 million bottles, and the smaller Asolo DOCG sold 24 million bottles. Due to its size, the

DOC is more export-oriented than the other two and can deploy promotional resources conferring a higher visibility to its frame. The main markers of tensions can be summarised by identifying the reactions of a share of the original insiders to the emergence of the commercial frame. For the benefit of synthesis, we consider different markers of conflict, the positions of the consortia, and the actions deployed in the contests.

Price and positioning. Smaller and historical producers of the original GI in the hills, representatives of some of the institutions therein, and part of the community of the area point to the threat of being absorbed in a narrative that cancels their specificity and, mostly, positions their wine unfavourably. What is at stake is the high-end price positioning and the persistence of the original frame with its connection to tradition, *terroir*, and quality. Prosecco DOC is sold in large quantities because of its extended area of production, higher yields, and mechanically harvested grapes. Consequently, the price is lower than that of the DOCG. Therefore, one of the main strategies identified by the DOCG concerns price as a sign of high quality and to support the positioning. Prices attracted the tensions ensuing from this situation. «We have unique characteristics and unique capacities, we need to add value to this territory because otherwise our territory will be swallowed by the DOC» (II5DOCG). «Our task is to raise the price of our bottles» (II2DOCG).

Differentiation. The analogy with Champagne is also pivotal in illustrating the tensions that emerged after 2009. Prosecco's pioneers explicitly referenced it as a model for elevating quality. Since the “commercial frame” used Champagne as a benchmark to affirm the enormous success of the extended GI, some producers in the historical area renounced the parallel altogether and claimed that «it is pointless to compare sales between Champagne and Prosecco, as the latter represents a “low-cost phenomenon”» (CI3DOCG). Other DOCG producers, however, still look at Champagne as an inspiration, as a GI that differentiates its inner areas and corresponding wine prices. Thus, a deployment of the original frame to oppose the sheer power of the commercial one and to differentiate the wine of the hills is the creation of the “Rive” (shores) to distinguish different production areas in the DOCG according to where the vineyards lie in the hills.

Name and identity. While DOCG producers recognise the importance of the DOC in expanding the global awareness of the wine, they find that the extension has intensified internal competition and that it has flattened the positioning of the wine: «I don't care if the DOCG has been growing more because of the 2009 expansion, what I care about is consumers' perception [...] Overseas clients do not even know where Veneto is. If they do, it is because of Venice. Therefore, they cannot understand that there are different Proseccos, and that hinders our capacity to transmit our distinctive identity» (CI3DOCG).

A number of firms in the hills either renounced using the “Prosecco” label altogether in their bottles and in their communication, or emphasised the difference between their product and that of DOC producers by associating Prosecco to formulas like “high-end” in their promotion. These firms, often referred to as the “rebels” (Calia, 2023), by cancelling the Prosecco label or using formulas that do not comply with product regulations, generated tensions within the DOCG consortium board. The word «Prosecco now takes our identity, the one of Valdobbiadene, out of our wines [...] we have to decide whether it corresponds to the style or to the consequences of being produced in the historical territory, where hills, exposition, altitudes create character and identity. Unfortunately, Prosecco is perceived as a style: good quality, obviously, but simplicity and standardisation» (CI3DOCG). The same firms have been asking for the insertion of the formula “Conegliano Valdobbiadene” in every occurrence of communication that denotes events or places in the hills using only the word Prosecco. Sports events such as the Prosecco Marathon or the Prosecco Cycling, popular events held in the area, should be renamed including the “Hills of Conegliano-Valdobbiadene” along with the name of the GI. Similar claims were made for the trail that runs through the hills that were recognised in 2019 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Obviously, the disputes on the names are actions aimed at increasing the visibility of

resistance to being absorbed in the commercial frame.

History. While advocates of the “commercial frame” state that the global success of Prosecco is due to the increase in production volumes and the prominent promotional campaigns run by the DOC consortium, advocates of the original frame offer an alternative vision. «The DOCG has carried out a forty-year-long strategy, acting as a kind of start-up. Back in 2009, I was joking by saying that for this operation (the extension), the DOC should give us a royalty to be used for DOCG's promotion. Anywhere else, you won't offer a forty-year company start-up for free» (II4DOCG). «In 1995, there were already all premises for success, as Prosecco used to be a wine widely known in Italy and had a great market in Germany and Switzerland, so it was not so hard for the DOC to promote it afterwards» (II4DOCG). One informant in the DOC confirmed this vision: «I think it is undeniable that the DOC was born from the efforts carried out in the years by the DOCG. However, the DOCG is struggling compared to the DOC, and I am sorry for this. The DOCG is the spearhead of the Prosecco system, but it is hard to promote it as the spearhead because the consortia are divided» (CI5DOC).

The Hills. Since 2009, under the guidance of the then Italian Ministry of Agriculture, the same Luca Zaia that guided the extension of the GI, a candidacy to become the 55th Italian UNESCO World Heritage site was presented. The hills were included in the UNESCO tentative list in 2010. According to the candidacy dossier, several reasons guaranteed the recognition: the land is a visible testimony to the capacity of the men and women who cultivated it; the role of viticulture is emphasised in the representations of Italian Renaissance artists such as Cima da Conegliano and Bellini; the quality of production; finally, the mesh between human ingenuity and winemaking embodied in the importance of the oenological school of Conegliano (ATS Conegliano Valdobbiadene, 2019). The recognition in 2019 is seen as an important marker of difference for the original milieu of the GI: «Currently we are known as a DOCG with an added value that is given by the UNESCO recognition in 2019» (CI4DOCG). Quotes like this point towards a surplus of distinction for producers in the historical area thanks to the recognition as a UNESCO heritage site, a fact that should shield from the equivocal effects of the enlargement of the brand's designated area. Many informants were aware of the potential implications in the future: «Things are going truly well now but we need to plan for potential future criticalities, and to do that, we need coordination concerning prices, volumes, and reserves» (CI5DOC). The potential distinction guaranteed by the UNESCO recognition was a terrain for diatribes. DOCG producers criticised the use by the DOC producers and consortium of images of the hills in their promotion, and claimed that the name Prosecco should be removed from the UNESCO Heritage site in order to preserve the identity of the hills to avoid being confused with the larger area of production of Prosecco wine. «Sometimes it is bothersome that to promote Prosecco DOC they use images of vineyards in the hills. It is an unfair competition» (II2DOCG). An informant stated: «We do not agree with the choice of using “Colline del Prosecco” wording as it is a further element of confusion with the Prosecco produced in the plains» (II5DOCG).

4.2. Managing contestations in extended GIs: actors, strategies, and practices

Tensions have surfaced in the past 15 years, especially in public debate and the media. “Rebels” are still pushing an agenda aimed at downplaying the importance of the word Prosecco and advocating the use of Conegliano Valdobbiadene as a marker of differentiation from the rest of the GI. At the same time, within the DOCG and the DOC, several producers and institutional actors recognise that even if the extension threatens to water down the difference among the sub-areas, the word Prosecco has been crucial for the peculiar economic phenomenon that enriched nine provinces and offered commercial opportunities to the producers of the hills (Bortone, 2022). Nonetheless, in one critical year for Italian wine exports (2023), Prosecco remained stable in terms of

market shares and increased its share of penetration in the French market (+21%) and in new areas such as East Europe (UTV Ismea, 2024). The positive performance of the GI measures the coexistence of the two frames and the successful management of tensions. While they are present and surface frequently, the system proceeds and finds an equilibrium thanks to the management solutions we devised in our analysis.

Political agency. First, the interviews with informants adhering to different frames and consortia confirmed the relevance of a specific actor—a politician and policymaker—in building the basis for the extension and in tracing the coordinates of the coexistence of different actors and world views. In 2008, the newly approved European CMO required the GI to redesign its boundaries, with the risk of losing Prosecco altogether. The interaction between farmers' associations and the Italian Minister of Agriculture was a critical juncture in conceiving and legitimising the extension. The Minister's nimble response to the new CMO regulations that prescribed the coincidence between the GI and a toponym avoided the dissolution of the appellation. Hence, the decision to enlarge the GI was mandatory given the localisation of Prosecco (the town) outside the GI's historical boundaries. Simultaneously, it addressed the existing pressures and aspirations of "outsiders" producing a wine that aimed at "Prosecco" status. The detection of opportunities and threats, a swift decision-making process, and construction of consensus on the territory were not the only instances in which the agency and proactivity of the political actor emerged. As informants effectively stated «In (2009) Zaia was farsighted and started this revolution of making the former Valdobbiadene Conegliano DOC as a DOCG and the rest of the area as a DOC, where DOCG is the top of the Prosecco pyramid» (II2DOCG); «Zaia undertook an epochal change in 2009 as he enabled a radical (positive) change in the economy of the Prosecco territories, while at the same time maintaining a compromise by keeping the three PDOs independent» (II3DOCGA)».

Moreover, immediately after the extension, the same ministry launched the hills' candidacy to the UNESCO Heritage Site list, a move that gave the chance to differentiate the hills from the plains.

Whenever tensions escalate between the different frames, the then ministry—today the president of the Veneto region—takes a position and publicly discloses the importance of preserving the unity of the extended GI while valorising internal differences. While one would expect a politician to maintain a neutral position in matters such as the opposition between the two frames and their proponents, the politician is listened to by contestants and wine professionals. In 2022, when the diatribes related to the legitimate use of "superiore" (high-end) attribute for the Prosecco of the hills escalated in the national press, he intervened in a variety of newspapers by saying that «DOC and DOCG are like siamese twins: the life of one depends on the life of the other [...] Do you think Champagne producers would have entered into such a public conflict? Did somebody think about the reaction of consumers? They might ask "what have we drunk?" Which are the "real" bubbles?». Moreover, he stated: «I think I have the right to express myself since I started it all in 2009 with my decree and since it is for my activity that in 2019 the hills became a UNESCO site. The DOCG knows that it is the cradle and history of Prosecco, but they also know that they do not have an exclusive on the name. The GI has other problems: environmental sustainability, flavescence doree [a disease of the vine]».

Territorial portfolio strategies. The history of the Prosecco GI after its extension shows that an effective way to prevent harmful disruptions is the emergence—by design or by emergence—of a division of labour in positioning and promotion in foreign markets. Several quotes by respondents on the three sides of the GI acknowledged the enlargement as beneficial: a relentless growth in the demand for the "easy, sparkling wine" could not be met by the extant production in the historical area. Thus, the enlargement allowed to accommodate the demand in the

existing market. Moreover, the development of relatively cheaper versions of Prosecco by firms in the DOC area allowed the entire system to be known in emerging markets and segments of demand that might later learn about the specificity of each area and thus buy across the Prosecco spectrum. In terms of communication, the specialisation is quite visible: DOC producers invest in sponsorships in popular sports competitions with global appeal and adopt a casual communication style appealing to wide audiences (the claim "Italian Genio"). On the other hand, the DOCG communicates the values of tradition, the higher relevance of manual labour, and landscape-related factors as distinctive elements of their wines. Such complementarity continues to be a source of tension. Those rebels that are adopting niche strategies (Prosecco *sur lie*) or dropping the Prosecco name altogether from bottles and communication are piggybacking on the notoriety of the extended GI. If generic Prosecco were not that famous, their claims of being "different" would not be justified. Similarly, the attempt at replicating the system of *crus* and *grand crus* of Champagne or the *climats* of Burgundy is yet another move to mark a difference within a general GI that will pay if promotional efforts are adequate and governance solutions are found to stabilise the relative position of DOC and DOCG.

Governance architecture. Expanding a GI 40 years after its recognition, as is the case for Prosecco, might spark conflicts. Different tensions emerged in the Prosecco GI, which needed to be managed. The internal dimension of "firefighting" among consortia belonging to the same GI deserves attention. In the case we analysed, the governance architecture of the expanded GI is the lever through which the three consortia found ways to settle disputes and control the risks of escalating conflicts. The three consortia, as stated, guarantee the representation of the components of the winemaking sector. However, their relative weight is decided by their production volumes, thus allowing larger producers sitting on all boards to act as intermediaries and eventually settle disputes. Having representatives from the same firms sitting on the boards of the three consortia allows the domestication of tensions and finding compromises; most importantly, it allows the passage of information between one frame and the other. This form of governance, completed by the role of political agents that recall producers and consortia of their responsibilities in sustaining the well-being of workers and families, works as an infrastructure of tension management. While it does not avoid their surfacing, it processes them, and ultimately guarantees an enduring equilibrium that one might define as an "armed peace".

5. Discussion and conclusions

The paper moved from the paradoxical situation that might ensue from the success of a GI: the more a locale succeeds in producing a "unique" and scarce product that commands higher margins on the market, the more the boundaries that delimit an appellation might be put under discussion by claimants of rights to inclusion. While the literature on GI amendment is solid (Marescotti et al., 2020), few studies dealt with the implications of the geographical extension of a GI. Those dealing with the issue like Meloni and Swinnen (2018) analysed the dynamics conducive to an extension and the role of different forces, while leaving the aftermath of the expansion uninvestigated. We aimed to shed light on the persistence of tensions between former insiders and newcomers in an extended GI, and on how these tensions might be managed. To grasp the origins of these tensions we resorted to the role of world views and interpretations of situations (frames) used by different parties to understand the root of contestations. To contribute to the ongoing debate on GIs, we retrospectively analysed the case of the extension of the Prosecco GI, one of the most famous and dynamic European wine GIs, a commercial success of the last 20 years.

We found evidence of the inherent contradictions that might be

generated by GIs as tools to support the upgrading of the rural economy of a region. The Prosecco case is one in which the gains from distinctiveness generate legitimate claims from neighbouring producers that are ultimately accepted, enlarging the number of beneficiaries. Two types of tensions run parallel to the extension. One, which we documented, is between the world views–frames–of original insiders and newcomers, each one elaborating a discourse that fits with their interests. A second tension is the one between the scarcity entailed in the whole construction of PDOs and the positive distributional effects of extending their boundaries. The case we analysed suggests the opportunity to manage this tension by patrolling a delicate equilibrium wherein the pure GI approach with its emphasis on exclusion, delimitation and protection, makes concessions to economies of scale in rural production. In other words, while the place-specific features that are key to the recognition of a GI remain even if somehow watered down, the Prosecco model of extension suggests the importance of a strong emphasis on the common technical practices–in our case the Charmat/Martinotti method to process Glera grapes–as a way of enlarging the beneficiaries of the wealth generated by the distinction.

Obviously such a transformation of the identity of a GI might be counterproductive in the absence of shared, even if periodically contested, ideas of where and how the geographical boundaries of a GI should be placed. Our study identifies three main factors responsible for the management of an “armed peace” that characterises the life of an extended (and extremely successful) GI. First, and relevant for rural areas envisioning GIs as an instrument for development, political agency plays a relevant role. Public discourses refer to policymakers as enablers of private agency. In contrast, we found that policymakers and politicians can play a guiding role in setting missions for private actors, coordinating potentially contrasting interests, and taking actions to allow an extension to happen and to be governed. Our case resonates with Mazzucato’s thesis that (central or local) governments’ role goes beyond facilitating private action. Political agents, whether actual politicians, institutional representatives, or non-corporate actors, can set strategies around opportunities that private firms might have yet to understand (Mazzucato, 2016, 2018) and might coalesce the actions of firms for the generation of wealth that percolates to local communities.

Second, we found that even if fuelled by tensions and acts of “rebellion”, the creation of a variety of differentiated versions of the generic product–the Rive, the Superiore, the sur-lie and niche versions of Prosecco–allows a large GI to offer heterogeneous products and “stories” and most of all differentiated entry points, allowing also for the establishment of different price points.

Finally, we find that the governance architecture of the larger GI creates the conditions and channels for the management of tensions and coordination among different sub-areas. The distribution of board seats according to the producers’ relative market share allows some of them–the larger ones–to sit simultaneously on different consortia steering bodies. Thus, they become crucial in deciding the strategies of each sub-GI and influencing the strategy of the general one. Moreover,

they manage the issues formally and informally in the different boards coordinating the different “souls” of a GI and disseminating information. Hence, our study puts emphasis on the role of consortia in post-extension management of tensions and development. Their structure and their efficacy in representing the variety of actors and interests are fundamental in creating cohesion within sub-areas. Then, they are fundamental in mediating positions when other consortia are called into question. Their importance in keeping tensions at bay will become increasingly visible in the future, given the transformation that product regulations and consortia protocols will have to go through to respond to environmental imperatives (Ponte, 2021). For instance, novel and more sustainable production processes or packaging materials will allow meeting consumers’ expectations for smaller footprints. Meanwhile, these transformations will create tensions since they will either transform the cost structure of some actors in the value chain or will be met with hostility given their mismatch with “tradition” and *savoir-faire* that are constitutive of the GI identity.

The study has limitations that stem from the methodological choices that were made. The single case study allowed us to focus on the expansion mechanisms and processes to gain a multifaceted and systemic view of the history of Prosecco; a comparative study would further refine our results.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Francesca Checchinato: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Vladi Finotto:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Christine Mauracher:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editin. **Chiara Rinaldi:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The research project was carried out thanks to institutional funding coming from the authors’ institution. No external funding was used. None of the authors has any financial or personal relationship with other people or organisation that might bias their work.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix 1. Interviewees’ anonymised data

Informant	Duration
Institutional Informant 1 DOC (II1DOC)	60'
Company Informant 1 DOC (CI1DOC)	70'
Institutional Informant 2 DOCG (II2DOCG)	60'
Company Informant 2 DOCG (CI2DOCG)	70'
Institutional Informant 3 DOCG Asolo (II3DOCGA)	60'
Company Informant 3 DOCG (CI3DOCG)	50'
Company Informant 4 DOCG (CI4DOCG)	55'
Institutional Informant 4 (II4DOCG)	70'
Institutional Informant 5 DOCG (II5DOCG)	50'
Company Informant 5 DOC (CI5DOC)	60'
Company Informant 6 DOC (CI6DOC)	80'
Company Informant 7 DOC (CI7DOC)	30'
Company Informant 8 DOC (CI8DOC)	50'

Source: authors’ elaboration

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