Italian Community Co-operatives Responding to Economic Crisis and State Withdrawal: A New Model for Socio-Economic Development

MICHELE BIANCHI (UNIVERSITY CARLO BO)
MARCELO VIETA (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO)
Outline

➢ Italian context: Economic & social features
  ➢ Community co-operatives: Multiple characteristics and peculiarities
  ➢ How Italian community co-operatives articulate the SDGs
  ➢ Final considerations
Italian Context

- Radical spending review for public authorities and consequent decreases in services
- Vast share of public properties and infrastructures underused or abandoned
- Economic downturns, persistent unemployment, large wave of firm closures
- Extended rural areas suffering persistent depopulation

(Fazzi, 2013; Micelli & Mangialardo, 2016; Vieta et al., 2017; Visco, 2018; Ranci Ortigosa, 2018)
Co-operatives & Community Development

➢ Co-operatives involve members in the democratic governance of the firm, working primarily for their mutual benefit rather than profit maximization

➢ Co-operatives well-suited for non-profit status and social missions, adept organizations for operating in territories and economic situations not traditionally profitable

➢ Co-operatives have open membership, and strong mutualistic and self-help goals that can easily relate with their social contexts

➢ They can involve various stakeholders for planning local initiatives and interventions for communities’ interests

(Wilkinson & Quarter, 1996; Zeuli et al., 2004; Majee & Hoyt, 2011; Vieta & Lionais, 2015; Bianchi, 2019)
Italy’s community co-operatives: how they work

➢ Assessment of local problems and potentialities, in particular the regeneration of assets
➢ Local networks for structuring service planning and economic development with stakeholders
➢ Job opportunities in marginal situations for locals
➢ Embedded social values and local cultural heritage

(Borzaga & Zandonai, 2015; Mori, 2017; Bianchi, 2019; Mori & Sforzi, 2019)
Valle dei Cavalieri Co-operative (Succiso Nuova)
Co-op Valle dei Cavalieri

- Saved the village from the abandonment
- Re-opened the old primary school with new services for both locals and tourists
- Territorial networking for new economic opportunities
- Assistance to elder people and families
Melpignano Co-operative (Melpignano)
Co-op Melpignano

- Community plan for solar energy
- Wide involvement of local citizenship
- Local service of water houses
- Local public park regeneration
Co-op Brigì (Mendatica)
Co-op Mendatica

- Collaboration with town hall for local sustainability
- Local adventure park regeneration
- Slow tourism
- Preservation of local cultural heritage
Community co-ops & the SDGs

➢ Help structure and manage the production, management, and use of clean energy from sustainable sources (SDG n°7)

➢ Support communities in marginal situations, improve employment in rural areas while providing marginal communities with essential services for their survival, as well as reducing poverty levels (SDGs n°8, 9, and 12)

➢ Ensure decent wages, good jobs, and reduced exploitation via workers’ self-management (SDG n°8)

➢ Support sustainable regeneration by promoting new economic activity and even repopulation (SDGs n°11).

➢ Melpignano’s clean and affordable water system (SDG n°6) and Succiso Nuova’s and Mendatica’s regeneration of their key community assets have included new soil management and the recycling of construction waste (SDG n°12).
Thank you for your attention

M.BIANCHI13@CAMPUS.UNIURB.IT
MARCELO.VIETA@UTORONTO.CA