

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

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MICHELE BIANCHI (UNIVERSITY CARLO BO)

MARCELO VIETA (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO)



# Outline

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

# Italian Context

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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)

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# Co-op Valle dei Cavalieri

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- 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)

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# Co-op Melpignano

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- Community plan for solar energy
- Wide involvement of local citizenship
  - Local service of water houses
  - Local public park regeneration

# Co-op Brigì (Mendatica)

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# Co-op Mendatica

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- Collaboration with town hall for local sustainability
- Local adventure park regeneration
  - Slow tourism
- Preservation of local cultural heritage

# Community co-ops & the SDGs

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- 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

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M.BIANCHI13@CAMPUS.UNIURB.IT

MARCELO.VIETA@UTORONTO.CA

