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Social Farming in Italy. Analysis of an «inclusive model»¹

The growing understanding of potential role of agricultural and rural resources to enhance the social, physical, mental and economic well-being draw the attention of an increasing range of stakeholders on Social Farming.

The contribute discloses the main results of a study focusing Social farming in Italy: actors, activity, networks of relationships within which the initiatives are implemented, agreements among heterogeneous actors, etc. The main aim is to provide a whole analysis of the possible processes of social and working inclusion in agriculture activities, including purposes and methods, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in the framework of the current welfare and rural development systems.

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1. Introduction

Social farming (SF) practices employ agricultural spaces and activities to provide benefits (inclusion, health and well-being) for vulnerable people. The debate in Europe (Braastad and Bjornsen, 2006; Hassink and van Dijk, 2006; Gallis, 2007; Dessein, 2008; Haubenhofner *et al.*, 2010a; Haubenhofner *et al.* 2010b; Dessein *et al.*, 2013) still presents different definitions of Social Farming, using heterogeneous conceptualizations, both amongst academics and the actors involved (farmers, users, service sector, public administration, etc.). There is no unique, precise definition of the concept nor a consent about the range, differences or intersections with other associated terms such as Green Care, Farming for Health, Green Therapies, Animal Assisted Therapies, Horticultural therapy, etc. (Hassink and van Dijk, 2006; Hine *et al.*, 2008a; Sempik *et al.*, 2010; Hassink *et al.*, 2012).

¹ The article is a revision and progress of the paper “The socio and working inclusion of disadvantaged people in agriculture: the “model” of Social Farming in Italy” presented at the 1st Joint SIDEA-SIEA Conference “Strategie cooperative e creazione del valore in una filiera alimentare sostenibile”, Bisceglie – Trani, 13 – 16 settembre 2017

Nevertheless, it must be considered that Social Farming is not a harmonized concept but a changing and evolving one, that has a high visibility in some countries as a recognized and formalized activity, but it has developed spontaneously assuming different connotations in different local contexts.

The farm context, from our point of view, is the core of SF, not only for the wide range of activities that this sector offers, but especially for the possible networks with heterogeneous actors: farmers, workers, customers, suppliers, etc.. Therefore, an agricultural perspective seems useful to analyse SF in order to consider it not as merely “hobby farming” or conceptualize as a minor economic activity helping in diversifying the farm business (Leck *et al.*, 2014).

To define SF, then, it is necessary going beyond a generic description and adopting an alternative approach. In Europe, three categories were suggested, in the past years, to conceptualize these issues: multifunctionality of agriculture, public health and social inclusion (Dessein and Bock, 2010). These categories do not affect at the same time and in the same way all farms, but are an instrument to analyse how SF has developed in several contexts and responded to specific needs. It is possible to characterize European countries mainly by one or other category. For example, Netherlands and Norway are more involved in a multifunctionality approach. Similarly, Flanders are more explicitly and directly focused on the agricultural sector, through direct fixed payments from the Ministry of Agriculture, intended to compensate reduced agricultural income (Dessein *et al.*, 2013). Public health approach is widespread in Austria (Wiesinger *et al.*, 2006) and in Germany (Neuberger *et al.*, 2006), while Italy is characterized by a social inclusion approach (Di Iacovo *et al.*, 2006; Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

Italian SF will be analysed on the basis of the studies on social farming and socio-working inclusion (Fioritti *et al.*, 2014; Lanfranchi and Giannetto, 2014; Dessein *et al.*, 2013; García-Llorente M. *et al.*, 2016), even in view of recent considerations about the role of social innovation in rural areas (Bock, 2016; Di Iacovo F. *et al.*, 2014). Considerations regarding the role of SF in creating connection among economic sectors and different typologies of actors (Leck *et al.*, 2014), also make it possible to introduce the concept of ‘connective agriculture’ even in analysing the Italian SF context.

According to Leck *et al.* (2014),

Care farming helps farmers to connect with people and people to connect with agriculture [...] “Agriculture” is perceived as encompassing a wider range of social, economic and cultural sets of practices than “farming” and connections lie at the very heart of care farming related outcomes (Pretty, 2002; Morris and Evans, 2004).

Through SF farmers can reconnect themselves with a different style of agriculture, which allows them to step off the neo-liberal agrarian technological paradigm. Indeed, Leck *et al.* (2014) underline that

connective agriculture is further appropriate with regard to service users because connections relate to a host of elements that include education, work, inner or outer self, the natural environment, family and friends, wider society and the food upon which we depend.

The connection, therefore, concerns recipients who connect with themselves and with other people; it concerns farmers, who connect with people, and the agricultural, social workers, who connect with other sector and build the mutually supportive relationships that facilitate inclusive communities. Particularly interesting is the role of SF in bringing together agriculture and health (Hine, 2008b; Hine *et al.*, 2008c) and social interventions.

However, not all the SF experiences are thought with this perspective; in some cases, specific services solve circumscribed needs, such as the nursery school, or recreational activities for vulnerable people, who are not linked to a wider community development project. In other cases, instead, a great variety of interventions is put in place to increase the capability of the individuals involved but also to make the local community more inclusive, *i.e.* able to sustain vulnerable people and offer them job opportunities.

The present contribution intends simply to provide a description of the phenomenon of SF in Italy with a quick review of the qualitative aspects of the social and working inclusion processes, one of the subsets of the SF constellation proposing some elements of reflection on a topic that is playing an important role in the current Italian welfare. The article describes the Italian SF and some case studies' results aimed to individuate those elements characterizing the processes of social and working inclusion, that constituted the link between agricultural and social/health sectors, an aspect on which there are not any available specific contributes. The case studies, in fact, are used to bring out from different experiences (local contexts, background, actors involved, recipients, activities) common elements related to both people empowerment and rural development.

2. Social farming in Italy

The first experiences of SF in Italy date back to the 70s and consisted of social and working inclusion, without any institutional regulation (Di Iacovo, 2008), in a period of great mobilizations of civil society that demanded the recognition of constitutional rights for disadvantaged people, prisoners, men-

tally ill people, and other vulnerable people. The civil society initiatives led the Italian Parliament to approve some important laws, i.e. the law 118/1971 for the abolition of special classes of disabled children, the law 180/1978 for the closure of asylums and for boosting social and working inclusion of psychiatric patients, etc. Instead, in 1991 it was approved the law n. 381, related to social cooperatives, that are companies which have the main and prevalent purpose of pursuing the general interest of the community in human promotion and social integration of citizens, through 2 typologies of cooperatives: the A-type, related to the management of socio-health and educational services, and the B-type, related to the implementation of economic activities (agricultural, industrial, commercial activities or services) aimed at employing disadvantaged people. 30% of the members of the B-type cooperatives have to be disadvantaged people. Therefore, social cooperatives are hybrid organizational forms that combine for-profit businesses and community approach to generate sustainable activities and broader community benefits. Their distinctive feature is their relationship with the specific social contexts that give rise to them (Somerville and McElwee, 2011). Since then, social and working inclusion of vulnerable people in Italy has been largely handled by the B-type social cooperatives (Borzaga and Depedri, 2012; Borzaga, 2014; Marzocchi, 2012). The so-called service sector had a key role in the development of these practices in agricultural contexts (Carini, Depredi, 2012; Confcooperative-Federsolidarietà, 2011), even if several farmers took part to this process. Particularly interesting are all those practices carried out by agricultural enterprises and cooperatives in collaboration with public services and service sector actors “In which a social aim is intentionally pursued as the outcome of an agricultural practice” (Senni, 2010). Until the early 2000s, however, it was not widespread in Italy the locution ‘social farming’.

This legislative framework promoted the development of SF in Italy (Di Iacovo, 2008; Di Iacovo and O’Connor, 2009), that had different paths in several contexts, depending on actors, local needs, social and human capital.

In the past ten years this set of practices has drawn the attention of an increasing range of rural stakeholders, researchers, social workers, Public Institutions. The growing understanding of the potential role of agricultural and rural resources for enhancing the social, physical, mental and economic well-being led some Regions to adopt laws to recognize SF and support it through Rural Development Programs. In 2015, the Italian Parliament adopted the law 141 providing a framework of principles and procedures to recognize social farming practices in a homogenous way. The law 141/2015 identifies 4 typologies of social farming:

- Social and working inclusion of people belonging to the weakest sectors acknowledged by local and regional welfare bodies and working and social

inclusion of disadvantaged and disabled people, as defined by the current legislation;

- Social, socio-sanitary, rehabilitative, therapeutic, training and educational services for families, seniors, disadvantaged and disabled people;
- Social activities to support local communities, which make use of material and immaterial agricultural resources to provide services useful for everyday life, as well as promoting, supporting and achieving actions of social and occupational inclusion, recreation and education;
- Educational activities addressed to vulnerable people.

This new legislative framework, the success of SF activities and the presence of actors, such as intermediaries or dedicated boundary-spanners (e.g., workers with hybrid backgrounds or researchers) promoted the further development of SF in Italy (Dell’Olio, 2017). In Italy, SF includes a wide range of practices and activities supporting a new idea of Welfare System (Giarè, 2012); therefore, it seems to have developed mainly the first typology of SF, aimed at achieving the social and working inclusion of vulnerable people (Di Iacovo and O’Connor, 2009, Dessein and Bock, 2010, Di Iacovo *et al.*, 2006),

Looking at the SF experiences across Italy to date, social farming consists of a broad range of activities that have some common elements: agricultural production, sustainable growth and services aimed to empower groups of people, such as individuals with a physical or mental disability; people recovering from drug addiction or imprisonment; young people; elderly; abused women.

Many experiences of SF orientate their productions to organic and natural high quality products (Ciaperoni, 2011), short chain and local market, responding to a rising awareness concerning “Ethical Product”, able to combine high quality products and the purchase of moral satisfaction, respect of the environment, equality in the workplace and fairness of trade conditions.

However, social farming refers to a dynamic and developing sector which creates links between farming and social purposes. Hence Social Farming must be understood as a new, dynamic and developing sector that consists not only of those actions in which the main objective is the production, processing and/or the commercialization of food products, but also concerns the employment of persons at risk of social exclusion and activities that have therapeutic objectives.

3. Methodology

In Italy there are few and partial available statistics on social farming. There is still a gap between the expansive trend of social farming (SF) on national scale and the research on it, that is generally based on a qualitative ap-

proach due to the lack of quantitative information. There is a clear need for SF to be underpinned by interdisciplinary research in different spheres, in order to validate empirical results, to analyse its impact and benefits from different point of views (social, economic, health, individual, sustainability, farm structure, etc.) and to ensure the dissemination of experiences on the ground.

In order to overcome this lack of data, the CREA Research Centre for Policy and Bio-economy carried out a survey aiming to gather information on different dimensions of SF² in Italy.

An “Expert Table”³ (ET) has been set up: it is made up of Italian researchers who study the phenomenon of social agriculture from different points of view. The ET shared the objectives of the research and defined the method of the investigation. The table is characterized by a multidisciplinary of skills; therefore, in addition to the common need to describe the AS phenomenon in Italy, some areas of deepening linked to networks of relationships, disability, recipients, sustainability and the modality of investigation have been added.

The study method chosen is based on the survey conducted by means of questionnaire. The study took place in two steps: the first step is carried out through experimental survey with the aim of collecting information of the SF operators, while the second step is aimed at investigating the issue of social and working inclusion.

The survey was conducted through CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) method; an online respondent-friendly questionnaire (Dillman, D.A. *et al.*, 1998) has been sent to about 1,200 actors (farmers, cooperatives, associations, etc.), previously identified through consultation of lists published by some Regions and literature review. More precisely, the sample companies were contacted by sending an e-mail containing the link to the online questionnaire and the instructions for the autonomous compilation of it. Almost at the end of the first survey phase (the so-called spontaneous return) a telephone reminder was made to those who did not complete the questionnaire. A second reminder, made again by e-mail, was made on the occasion of the presentation of the partial results during a public workshop (December 2016).

The questionnaire was articulated in six sections with multiple and closed response questions: master data (naming, geographic location), general framing (legal form, constitution year, employees), agricultural aspects (UAA, turnover, constitution year, primary and agricultural related activities, agricultural employees), social aspects (type of service, networking, social employees,

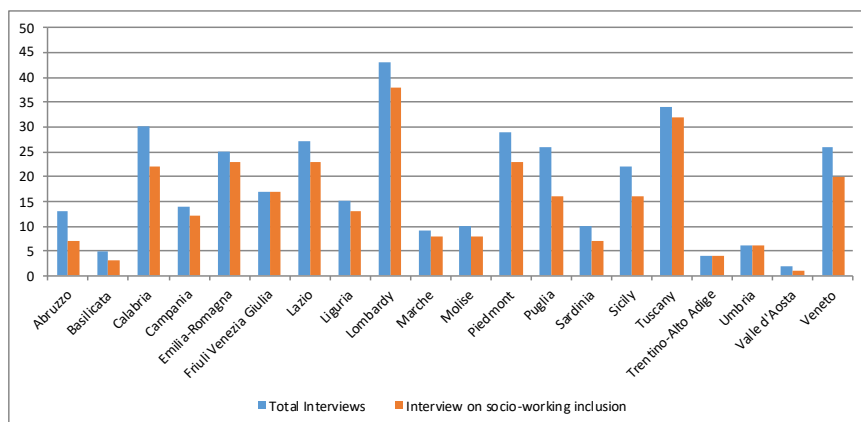
² The survey was conducted in the framework of the National Rural Network and in collaboration with INAPP, period 2016-2017.

³ It is composed by Research Institutions (CREA PB, ISS, INAPP) and Universities (Pisa, Tuscia and Perugia)

types of services, network agreements), economic sustainability (financing, investments) and assessment (strengths and weaknesses of the SF).

The experimental survey recorded a response rate of 32 percent of the sample, equal to about 400 operators that are distributed throughout the national territory; 299 operators of these are involved in social and work inclusion (Fig. 1). Despite the limits of a CAWI research and without statistical sampling, this is the Italian Survey on the SF that involves the most significant group of actors by number, geographical distribution, activity and legal form.

Fig. 1. Distribution of total agro-social enterprises interviewed and that involved in social and work inclusion (n°).



Source: Our elaboration on Italian National Rural Network data.

Through a multivariate analysis we characterize the Italian social farming in four categories on the basis of their juridical form: farmers (individual enterprises, companies, farmers cooperatives, etc.), social cooperatives (A-type, B-type and A+B type)⁴, public bodies (local health authority, hospitals, prisons, schools, universities) and other actors (associations, local action groups (LAG), consortia, rehabilitation centres, communities and religious institutions).

⁴ Art. 1 law 381/1991: Social cooperatives aim to pursue the general interest of the community in human promotion and social integration of citizens through:

A) management of socio-health and educational services;

B) carrying out different activities - agricultural, industrial, commercial or service - aimed at the employment of disadvantaged people.

The second phase, in order to identify the purposes and methods of socio-working inclusion, was developed using data collected in 4 case studies (Creswell, Maietta, 2002; Laws *et al.*, 2003; Yin, 2018), for the exploration of differences and similarities within and between cases.

The case study is one of the most used methodologies for analysing processes and identifying the “mechanisms” that generate certain results and/or impacts. This methodology is normally applied in new and innovative situations or in the analysis of pilot programs, in policies based on partnership logic during the definition process, and when it is believed that “the success” of an intervention is strictly dependent on specific situation; these are cases in which the result is not easily definable *a priori* because it depends on several variables.

Therefore, this methodology allows to recognize the characteristics of a case and to identify micro-ethnography, which are generally constructed according to the grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995). According to this theory, the analysis is certainly oriented by pre-notions that act as “sensitizing concepts” in the beginning phase of analysis, but these pre-notions can/must be dropped down when data collection, observation, coding, their categorization and the elaboration of theories, influencing each other during field work, questioning them, enriching them, radically changing their meaning and content.

The case studies, selected on the basis of the results of the multivariate analysis, the analysis of literature and documents, interviews with stakeholders aimed at detecting the perception of the territories’ needs and the presence of practices defined as innovative by the stakeholders, are:

1. Social Cooperative “I Berici” (Vicenza, Veneto Region), that collaborates with many local enterprises in educational and socio-working path;
2. Social Cooperative “Resistenza” (Naples, Campania Region), that cultivates lands confiscated from the mafia;
3. The VivaIo shelter Laboratories, run by social cooperative “Agricoltura Capodarco” (Grottaferrata, Lazio Region);
4. Social farming “Montepacini” (Fermo, Marche Region), specialized in work-to-school alternation especially for mental disabled students.

The investigation has been conducted by on-site visits and semi structured interviews (Guala, 2003; Bichi R. 2007; Yin, 2018) to identify determinants of social and working inclusion: to give the whole analysis of the possible processes of social and working inclusion in agriculture activities, highlighting the strengths and weakness in the framework of the current welfare system and rural development.

Data analysis has been based on managing data, including linking data, creating and assigning categories (Dey, 1993). A triangulation process per-

mitted to compare the information collected by interviews and grey literature with the information presented by the scientific literature on social farming and social and working inclusion. The results presented are therefore the result of a process of discussion, socialization and synthesis of the experiences and visions of the actors respondents.

4. Results by national survey on Social Farming

According to the survey, the most frequent SF activities are social and work inclusion for vulnerable people and people with disabilities (PWDs), and interventions and social services for local communities. More in detail, 260 respondents (over 70% out of the total) provide social and working inclusion activities for disadvantaged groups; 150 provide social services and 122 provide both of them. Data confirm, therefore, the inclusive approach of Italian social agriculture (Di Iacovo, 2006).

The juridical form of agro-social actors that are involved in social and work inclusion is either social cooperatives and individual farms (57% of the total) and it is spread across all Italian regions, although there is a greater incidence of survey in some regions of North (Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna). According to the survey SF is mainly based on small-to medium scale farms, characterized also by high employment and a variety of opportunities for people in need of support; their goals are opposite to those of the conventional farms whose overall aim is to reduce labour and to industrialize farms for becoming more efficient. Furthermore, many SF farms pay attention to the sustainability, more than 60% of them produce organically. There are strong similarities and communal motivations that bind organic farming and social agriculture, with particular reference to the overall capacity and enhancement of the environmental and social quality. Many farms grow vegetable gardens and rear animals, 70% deal with horticulture, 40% grow annual vegetables and fruits. Bees (21%) and poultry (19%) are reared very often, few rear cattle (9%) and pigs (8%). Direct selling, educational farms, on-farm processing activities and nature and landscape management are the most important multifunctional activities in agro-social farming.

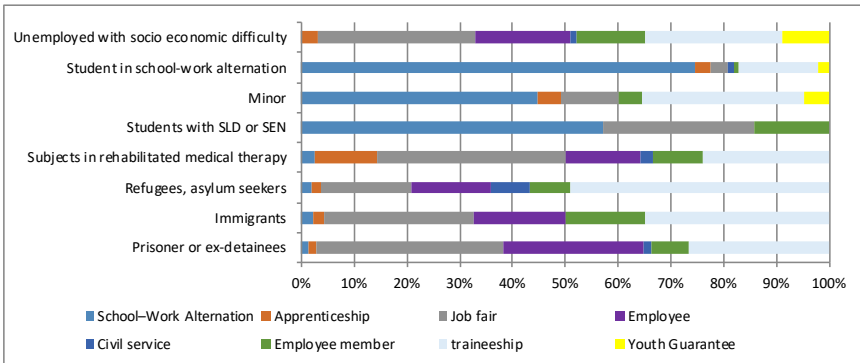
The services offered under the social farming are different and, in the specific case of the sample of 300 companies that meet the requirements of law 141/2015, fall within the scope of social inclusion: 79% of the total sample deliver social services, 63% traineeship and 61% orientation for disadvantaged people and people at risk of exclusion.

The 79% of respondent delivering services for social and working inclusion have different beneficiaries. Survey data show how people with disabilities are

the main target group of this kind of activities; for instance, shelter laboratories are often used to promote the working inclusion of severe mental disabled people or horticultural therapy for people with social problems.

Collaboration between heterogeneous actors is also witnessed by the dense network of relationships emerging from the analysis of the formal and non-formal agreements that the SF actors have activated for the realization of the activities.

Fig. 2. Involvement of target group (% by type of SF).



Source: Our elaboration on Italian National Rural Network data.

In fact, more than 1,700 agreements have been announced, most of them with social cooperatives, associations, schools, agricultural enterprises, social services and Local Health District. Most recurring arrangements are not formalized agreement (46%), followed by the Convention (24%), “other formal agreements” (13%) and the Memorandum of Understanding (11%).

The recipients of SF activities are involved in significantly different ways, but the highest percentages are in the working area (member of cooperatives, employee, job fair, traineeship, etc.), while minors and students are involved in work-to-school alternation path, as well as the attention of social farming to these new school relationships with the work.

5. The inclusive context as distinctive element of Italian Social Farming

The analysis shows how social and working inclusion is a complex and composite activities set, tailor-made or better focused on people through indi-

visualized paths: the recipients are involved in a heterogeneous set of specific actions (orientation, training, internship, accompaniment, etc.), which may conclude with an employment contract. The available actions set depending on the regional normative framework, local experiences and typologies of actors present on the territory. Often, regional laws transpose national regulations adapting them at social, economic and cultural context, with the introduction of specific activities or the mention to different definitions.

Therefore, the analysis of the case studies allows to identify some determinants of social and working inclusion, related farming context, activities typology, ways and means of involvement, context (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Determinants of social and working inclusion.



Source: Our elaboration.

According to the social workers interviewed, social and working inclusion is characterized not only by empowerment interventions, but mainly by the presence of an inclusive context: positive relationship between employer and employee and among workers, based on respect and trust; activities with increasing complexity and responsibilities; knowledge about the whole work process and its own role in the process; knowledge about the results of the activities in terms of commercialization, consumption, use of services and impact on local context (Social Cooperative “I Berici”). These elements refer to the capabilities approach formulated by Amartya Sen (1980, 1993), and afterwards developed in normative, ethical, methodological and political aspects. Among the most relevant aspects, in addition to cognitive and learning strat-

egies, the capability approach contemplates the organization and planning of work.

Therefore, the intra and extra company relationships are the most important elements in achieving a quality SF. Integration, in fact, refers to a situation and has a compensatory approach, with regard to educational sphere, looking at the individual person; the context is left in the background and the focus is on individuals, thus increasing a specialized response. On the contrary, inclusion refers to a process that looks at the vulnerable people in their entirety integrated into a context and it is addressed to the whole community.

The context takes importance, since the internal capabilities acquired by a person can be expressed if the external conditions allow it. The more socio-cultural and economic conditions allow equity, the more vulnerable people can be included in real socio-economic processes. In this sense it is essential to intervene also on the local community where people live and work (Freire, 1973).

We can therefore stress how there is an interdependence between individual freedom of agency and social, political and economic opportunities available.

Therefore, the well-being of the person consists not only in the activities that he is able to perform, but also in his freedom or opportunity (ability) to use them (Sen, 1980; Sen, 1993). Studies carried out in the Italian scholastic context (Chiappetta Cajola, 2015; 2017) indicate possible environmental factors that can be taken into consideration to detect the students working in their personal, social and environmental interactions, including socio-cultural barriers, such as those due to prejudices and stereotypes.

Even the presence of heterogeneous users involved in social and working activities or services in the same situation in a remarkable element contributing to the creation of a quality SF. For instance, Social Farming “Montepacini” in the Marche Region, that is carrying out work-to-school alternation especially for mental disabled students and other vulnerable people, involve in the same process both mental disabled students and political refugees: the students are supported in their activities in the farm by refugees that are also a specific target of the process of working inclusion. This approach avoids ghettos of the people involved, it highlights differences by bringing to light everyone’s abilities. Additionally, the SF actors carry out many initiatives with the involvement of local community, to sensitize it and to reduce the stigma that characterizes some disadvantaged people, such as mental illness, foreigner and generally the “otherness”. It is another important element that contributes to the construction of the inclusive context.

Looking for instance at the Campania Region, SF is strictly connected with the fight against Mafia, by reusing agricultural confiscated land from

organized crime. Within the beneficiaries of their initiatives there are the young adults who risk to be involved in criminal actions, lack of opportunities or particular social and economic conditions. The Social Cooperative named “Resistenza” has developed practises for working and social inclusion of these young adults or minors using special agreements with local authorities that define personalized care programs with specific budgets (*budget di salute*), promoted by regional legislative system. These agreements identify individual plans and objectives based on the evaluation of abilities and competences, personal needs, relationship network and the available social and health services, including activities provided by social cooperatives or farmers. This system represents an important support for the SF development in the Campania Region.

Even in the Social Cooperative “Agricoltura Capodarco” (Lazio), the role of the region was important to develop an inclusive model of SF. The “Vivalo” shelter Laboratory is a service started in 2008 in collaboration with the Mental Health Department of the Municipality of Frascati (Rome) and it is included within the local services policies (*Piano sociale di zona*). It is a shelter laboratory where people with mental disabilities and psychiatric disorder are principally engaged in floriculture activities and production of seedlings in the greenhouse, in synergy to the agricultural context and to the whole farm. The laboratory facilitates the increasing of independence, through training and working in a situation perfectly integrated in the daily agricultural and commercial activities. In addition, in collaboration with other local actors the Cooperative realizes initiatives aimed to improve social and economic growth of the local community.

In the inclusive approach there is an engagement from both the agricultural and social care/health sectors, especially network agreement between social/care sector on one hand and private farms on the other one. These actors belong to different worlds (i.e. different backgrounds, institutions, policies) that find in SF their gradual interaction, in a perspective of overcoming of sector-based model of care.

Related to the empowerment process, the social and working inclusion in a non-simulated situation of work favours the strengthening of the autonomy and enables to increase the residual capabilities and, at the same time, making people capable of knowing how to do, improving self-esteem, given the importance of a work role about personal and social identity.

To achieve the purpose of social and working inclusion, therefore, it is indispensable to realize not only several social activities in an agricultural context or to provide jobs for vulnerable people, but mainly to design a complex system of actions and relationships to connect internal with external inclusion dimensions.

6. Conclusions

In Italy, Social farming presents a wide range of opportunities which are differently used depending on the situation. The relationship dimension inside and outside farming context represents the core of the inclusive social farming. In fact, both the survey results and case study show how relations among participants, farmers and other people are allowed to improve capabilities and quality of life for beneficiaries. The study shows that SF is able to accommodate the weakest sections of the population, transforming disadvantage or disability into a different ability to perform work functions.

Furthermore, all the actions aimed to link/involve the social and economic local actors and, more generally, the local community enable SF to make inclusive context, that is the context in which mutually supportive relationships facilitate social and working inclusion of vulnerable people.

When SF links different sector and different actors, as shown by the research illustrated, it may, consequently, generate benefits for all sectors and all actors involved, in terms of well-being, economic development and inclusion. The result, in a specific area, is the development of the whole local system, mostly in terms of cohesion. Some case studies demonstrate that SF can contribute to start processes of social rescue and deep cultural transformation directed to the whole community, beginning from the activities with vulnerable people. In this sense, inclusive context refers both to capability approach (Sen, 1983; 1990) and connective agriculture (Leck, 2014) and offers an interesting interpretation key of SF.

The well-design of SF initiatives and projects should consider those elements which encourage the implementation of contexts more inclusive and contribute to complex strategies of local development. Similarly, Regional Administrations should consider SF as an instrument for local development and not only as a diversification farming activity, even by the implementation of specific Measures of Rural Development Program.

The conceptualization of determinants on social and working inclusion is the results of an analysis of 4 case studies; it could be useful an application of this framework to study a larger number of experiences with the aim of verifying the usefulness of identified elements, by adding other elements and studying, more in detail, the relationships between the different levels in greater depth.

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