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**RESEARCH ARTICLE****TRENDS AND CHALLENGES OF THE ITALIAN THIRD SECTOR IN THE FIELD OF COMMUNITY ASSETS REGENERATION.****New convergences between public benefit and social entrepreneurship.****Maurizio Busacca***Ca' Foscari University of Venice***Flaviano Zandonai***Consorzio CGM*

**ABSTRACT:** The Paper investigates the challenges of the Italian Third Sector through the lens of their involvement in the management of community assets, such as when real estate and public spaces are regenerated on the purpose of activities of social interest, for instance confiscated properties to organized criminality, state-owned, religious corporations, and companies. Adopting the methodology of 'nested analysis', the paper explores quantitative data obtained from the ISTAT Census of non profit institutions, and qualitative data obtained from more than 50 case studies dealt with in recent scientific publications. Subsequently, the study further deepens the evidence emerged through the presentation and discussion of two case studies carried out by the authors: the Ex-Asilo Filangieri in Naples and Forte Marghera in Venice. The Paper highlighted that actions of the Third Sector in the field of regeneration of community assets for social aims have not to be treated as nonprofit "industry", in which general trends towards publicness and entrepreneurship are very noticeable. On the contrary, it looks like a field in which new forms of the Third Sector are emerging, and we can sort them as "enterprising community".

**KEYWORDS:** community asset, nonprofit organizations, regenerated spaces, social innovation, third sector

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## **1. Urban regeneration and community assets as keys to read the evolution of the Third Sector**

The neoliberal processes of transformation of urban regeneration strategies present two main trends of change (Pares, Marti-Costa, and Blanco 2014). On the one hand, they produce discourses that combine urban regeneration with more cooperative ways of urban policy making that strengthen the weight of the private sector in public decision-making. On the other hand, critical analyses emphasize that this transformation causes a serious weakening of urban democracy, leading to greater elitization, less transparency and less accountability in urban policy making. In recent years, many studies have sought to deepen these phenomena, but what is lacking in this field of research is a study that explores the relationship between the processes of regeneration of underused buildings and the types of organizations active in these processes.

Several types of real estate and public spaces regenerated for social interest activities, such as properties confiscated to organized criminality, state-owned, religious corporations, companies, etc., do not simply represent a form of reparation, however relevant, from negative externalities (abandon, real estate speculation, social marginalization, etc.). By now, the regeneration of a rising number of infrastructures represents the driving force of local development. Not only their distribution in the territory places them in an even more relevant position when it comes to determining the direction of cohesiveness politics, but also in terms of welfare and development in a broader sense (Battistoni and Zandonai 2017).

The regeneration with social finalities draws a field of experience and of sense where transformation processes based on inclusion and cooperation principles can be positioned. Such principles aim to improve the living conditions of people, as well as their community formations, through democratic empowerment and actions of active involvement of beneficiaries and other interesting figures. A regeneration with social purposes requires the development of new forms of organization and interaction able to face the social challenges from which the fulfillment of collective needs depend upon (Campbell and Sacchetti 2014).

In operational terms and from a supply standpoint, the regeneration of real estate and underused public spaces appears as an initiative of 'asset transfer' from public and private figures (State Property offices, National Railroad System, Municipalities, financing institutions, religious corporations, etc.). However not yet systematically, those figures outline new responsibility strategies on a vast scale, as well as a solution in order to enhance resources which otherwise would be stuck as losses in the economic balances of the organizations. Instead, the demand for social regeneration can be at-

tributed to the request by citizens, informal collectives, nonprofits, and social companies, for spaces to realize social, cultural, touristic/environmental initiatives.

As a whole, those spaces represent a new class of infrastructure: regenerated community assets aiming to have a positive impact on the quality of life (social protection, lawfulness/legality, education, environmental safeguard) and on economic development (Sacchetti, Christoforou, and Mosca 2018).

The observation of how the Third Sector (TS) deals with the management of the aforementioned regeneration processes could be useful for three reasons:

- first, it can help identify forms of innovative activities within the traditional field of action of the TS, that is to say, place the potential of social innovation of the TS;
- second, it can help observe and understand the evolution of the TS from advocacy to a publicness direction, by now recognized as a consolidated trend of the sector;
- third, the involvement of the TS in the regeneration processes of real estate and public spaces with social purposes, is a trend that can help anticipate some transformation in the sector.

As a conclusion, it is not only a matter of understanding how the TS enters the management processes of community assets, but more importantly, to understand which directions to obtain from this broad involvement.

## **2. Research design and the outline of the article**

The article focuses on the main challenges faced by the Italian Third Sector. Both the ability to answer to those challenges and their quality, are deeply intertwined within the legitimacy crisis, which strikes the TS. Indeed, the TS is accused of being too institutionalized, as well as of having an extreme entrepreneurial character, and consequently, of betraying its original political nature.

The theory at the basis of this research sees the TS as the expression of an anti-Statist and community model of society (Busso and Gargiulo 2016). According to this model, the tasks of promotion and protection of individual and collective needs are conferred to horizontal subsidiarity processes founded on the relational dimension. In Italy, this vision of the TS has been implemented especially by the Catholic tradition, as well as by that of antagonist movements. Such movements are juxtaposed by the rejection towards the State, by the demand of independence from public institutions, and by the development of forms of communitarian personalism characterized by the

production of goods which are neither public, nor private, but relational (e.g. of a community).

In this view, the TS has to earn its space between the State and the market. This action is pursued through behaviors that have an entrepreneurial nature, which does not represent the purpose of the organizational setup, but the means to pursue social and political goals (Anheir 2014). The encounter of these two theories - community personalism and social entrepreneurship - results in the analytic possibility of combining political and organizational requests in the form of the social entrepreneur (individual and collective) as policy entrepreneur (Kingdon 2003). Therefore, according to this hypothetical theory, the motives of organizations play an important role both in their activities and in their goals.

From this theoretical context, we could gather an analytic framework, defined by a space built upon the intersection of two orthogonal axes, identified from the dimensions which have greater space within the scientific and public debate:

- mutual benefit, addressed to the members of organizations/communities as opposed to public benefit, addressed to society;
- advocacy or promotion of the interests of a specific social group and service, as opposed to services, mostly oriented to the production of goods and services offered on the public or private market.

To further examine the focus of this research, the TS is analyzed in the field of the community assets management through:

- the construction and analysis of an “emerging database”, made up by Istat 2017 data, and a rich inventory of examples coming from a vast literature which, in the most recent years, has aroused broad debates;
- the in-depth analysis of trends detected through the development of two case studies and their comparison in order to detect divergences and convergences, from which to track down new challenges for the TS.

Therefore, from a methodological point of view, the work has been inspired by the mix-methods strategy, considered effective when facing complex issues and deep changes, developing a proper methodology, without neglecting the possibility to jointly use its two main research traditions in social sciences (Greene 2008). The approach chosen for this research is linked to the nested analysis (Lieberman 2005), as the sum of three informative sources: the 2017 statistic database of ISTAT, a broad number of case studies obtained from the systematic review of the academic literature, and of the information acquired from the in-depth investigation of two cases - the former Asilo Filangieri in Naples, and Forte Marghera in Venice. We attempt to reconstruct the two case studies through the reconstruction of the literature concerning these initiatives,

the analysis of secondary data and the realization of semi-structured interviews to four leaders<sup>1</sup> of the two organisations and to some qualified testimonies. Statistical analysis helped us to identify some evolutive trends of TS, which the case study contributed to understand in terms of orientation and results.

To conclude, the article is thus organized: the third paragraph traces the evolution of the Italian TS towards the public benefit, drawing the lines that emerge from Istat 2017, as well as from a list of examples of scientific literature; the fourth paragraph presents two case studies - the former Asilo Filangieri in Naples, and the management by the social co-operative Controvento of Forte Marghera in Venice - chosen because they show qualities that help further study emerging trends; the fifth paragraph compares two case studies and the detection of divergences and convergences. Among the conclusions, could be found the summary of the main topics from the article, as well as new questions for future research.

### **3. The evolution towards the public benefit of the Italian Third Sector**

The nested analysis is a research strategy based on an observations system that, from quantitative data regarding phenomena of a wide part of the population, through a process of 'zooming', progressively analyses case studies coherent to the first level of observation through qualitative methods. In this article, the 'nesting' process starts with Istat data, continues with the recap of some case studies included in six monographs that, in the latest years, have elaborated the phenomenon, and closes with two case studies.

#### *3.1. Istat data*

Looking at the data of the last Census of non-profit institutions (Censimento delle istituzioni nonprofit) realized by ISTAT in 1999, 2001 and 2011<sup>2</sup> using a national census list in 2015 using a representative sample (Istat 2015), some interesting indications regarding the publicness character of the non-profit organizations can be extrapolated.

<sup>1</sup> In Controvento two interviewees are the President and the Vice-president of the cooperative. In the case of Ex-Asilo Filangieri are two members of the informal group managing the building

<sup>2</sup> At 31 December 2011, there were 301,191 non-profit organisations active in Italy, 28% more than in 2001, with an increase in employees of 39.4%. Nonprofit organisations voluntarily provided data.

This variable is important because it helps to outline a distinctive trait of the TS that has been recognized in recent legislation at national level (Gori and Zandonai 2018). Moreover, these data are useful to understand the orientation of such actors towards the processes of re-use of assets and physical spaces to be regenerated as community assets .

### *3.1.1. The mission*

In a survey of ISTAT, non-lucrative organizations were distinguished between those having a specific mission inspired by constitutional principles linked to the support of initiatives civic or subsidiary participation (art. 118 Italian Constitution), and those not having such mission. The mission was formulated in three macro-areas:

1. the protection of rights, therefore regarding advocacy actions without productive nature;
2. the support to disadvantaged people, realizing inclusive objectives through personalized plans for “weak categories”;
3. the attention to collective assets that can be considered as a form of community advanced proxy. The third macro-area fosters processes of “active citizenship” often connected to initiatives of social regeneration, which in turn, contribute to the definition of a more articulate relation, not coinciding with two founding elements of the non-profit: solidarity and cohesion (Barbetta, Ecchia, and Zamaro 2016).

The results of the survey show, first of all, an important partition between non-profit organizations with general sociability aims (52,5% on a total of 301.191 units), and organizations with an explicit tendency towards the constitutional principles of representativeness, protection and social participation (47,5%). Among the latter, a further partition is possible by using two variables that, as a whole, contribute to approach in a more precise way the community input to the Italian non-profit. The first variable is linked to the public benefit orientation of the organization, aiming its services not only in favor of its members but also to a wide collectivity. Such option represents 72% of more than 143.000 non-profits with an explicit mission. Among them, 20% (28.000 units) declared that their activities are aimed subjects unrelated to members of the organization. The second variable is the proxy, even more cogent, allows to isolate the non-profit segment which is oriented towards the “safeguard of collective assets”: it represents 35.654 organizations corresponding to the 25% of the total of those organizations with an explicit mission, and to the 12% of the total non-profit. Among them, 50% declares that its sole mission is the safeguard of collective assets, while the other

half combines such aims to advocacy-oriented missions, also inclusive of weak categories. The latter type of organizations is oriented to engage with the public sphere, not only with contractual goals but rather for partnership goals, as assumed from the higher number of protocols and partnerships with public institutions.

Finally, the public benefit nature of the mission and its inclination to the safeguard of common assets is strictly related to the activism dimension: more than ¾ of nonprofit institutions with an explicit goal, work within the active citizenship of inclusion of weak subjects. Therefore, despite not being a prevailing sector, it acquires a non-residual substance. Most importantly, it appears to define its own organizational and strategic identity with regards to its broader section.

### *3.1.2. The sectors and modes of action*

The second comparison is sectorial and it is linked to the impact of production and cultural conservation activities in the determination of the mode of action of nonprofit within processes of social regeneration (Barbetta et al. 2016). As a matter of fact, several remarks revealed the role of cultural production and protection as a driver of regeneration processes (Busacca and Rubini 2016). Among the aforementioned 35.000 nonprofit institutions with an explicit mission of collective assets care, the 29% (more than 10.000 units) works in the cultural field, and it represents 19% of the cultural nonprofit total. Indeed, they show a direction of cultural production and protection towards community and local development. In most cases, the sub-population of cultural organizations for the safeguard of collective assets is of recent foundation (the 65% was created after 2000), marking a much more relevant performance as compared to the whole field (11,2% in 2011 against the 4,9% of the total cultural sector). Another relevant aspect concerns the organizational and business model. Sure enough, nonprofit cultural organizations active in the safeguard of cultural assets have a high component of voluntary work (200.000 volunteers, for an average of 19 per unit), and a low occupational contribution (only 9% of organizations employs 6.000 paid workers). Besides, they are characterized by an economic model focused on the market dimension (the 31% earns more than 50% of their economic resources from market exchange, against 19,9% of the cultural sector). Finally, the identikit is completed by observing a higher inclination to public-private partnerships: the 38% of cultural nonprofit which safeguard collective cultural assets signed a collaboration with public institutions (mainly local), as compared to 17% of the total cultural sector. The relational character of these organizations can be measured not only with regards to the public sector but

also and more generally with different social articulations in the territory and with each citizen. Indeed, within this organizational population can be detected a widespread ability to enhance awareness events, using digital tools (social networks) and to organize fundraising campaigns.

### *3.1.3. The people*

The third and last indicator regarding the TS contribution to local communities is not linked to organizations but to people, particularly those working as volunteers. In fact, they represent the main type of employment for nonprofit organizations (4,7 M of volunteers), even though the paid workers as not as few as one might assume (0,9 M paid workers). The Italian voluntary work has been clustered by public record (gender, cultural and social status, etc.) and organizational variables (mission, the field of action, dimension, etc.), and it led to the identification of five groups (Stoppiello and Nicosia in Barbetta et al., 2016). One of the most significant, in terms of the number of organizations involved (29,5% of the nonprofit total) and of volunteers (44,5%) concerns the field of the safeguard of collective assets which, in this analytical context, spans widely. That is to say, it also considers the activities of protection of the territory and safeguard of the environment. It represents a significant is the contribution, higher in absolute terms, to voluntary work involved in sporting and recreational services, as well as to the one operating in care services. The latter is a context which, in a way, monopolized the debate over characteristics and motivations of volunteers in the past years (Ascoli and Pavolini 2017).

In short, the profile on Italian nonprofit appears strongly characterized by the pair publicness and regeneration of community asset. However, it might not have taken a final “industry” aspect, structured on organizational models and strategic and operative coordination modes, able to validate it as the main stakeholder in the field of social development.

### *3.2. The construction of an ‘emerging database’*

Istat data help comprehend the reasons why studies on social enterprises, nonprofit and social innovation focused on community asset. The interest on the reuse of real estate and public spaces is growing, in particular through narrative approaches based on case studies which emphasize innovation instead of mainstream politics. By now, the



storytelling of social regeneration within the Italian context is so widespread and solid to be subject to analysis on secondary data. From it, it is possible to extract variables that form a qualitative database which outlines the trends in the sector.

In this article, the aforementioned analysis is carried out highlighting trends common to a set of cases taken from 6 monographs and articles published in Italy between 2015 and 2018. 'Sud Innovation' (Consiglio and Riitano 2015) is a collection of 12 social initiatives originated from forms of valorization of abandoned cultural heritage in the South of Italy. 'Leggere la rigenerazione urbana' (Andorlini, Bizzarri, and Lorusso, 2017) includes 15 stories which demonstrate how nowadays, in Italy, there is an interest to interpret social innovation through the use of spaces, assets, places and regenerated contexts. 'Caratteri, attori e politiche dei community hub. Un dialogo con i protagonisti' (Calvaresi and Lazzarino 2018) is an article describing the community hub from the point of view of its protagonists. Community hubs are spaces hosting knowledge and distribution of welfare services, together with other activities of high social impact. 'La rivolta della cooperazione' (Fumagalli, Giovannelli, and Morini 2018) includes a collection of exemplary models of social tests highly conflictual with regards to dominant models. 'Spazi fuori dal comune' (Ostanel 2017) includes 8 cases of urban regeneration which, in a different scale, represent a wide set of action and institutional practice. 'Le case del quartiere di Torino: un mezzanino per l'innovazione sociale context dependent' (Sforzi and Zandonai 2019) is a research report which contextualizes the 8 'Case del Quartiere' in Turin from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. Those six publications include more than 50 stories of social regeneration and community asset.

From this emerging database, could be deduced variables useful to define in broad terms the dynamics with the processual nature of social regeneration and the organizational structure of its actors.

In most cases, the regeneration is concerned an actual artifact which was previously intended to social and cultural activities. In other cases, the productive structure was not pertinent to the new intended purpose.

For what concerns the actors fostering the processes, the data show a fundamentally double-segmented framework. The former, often accentuated by its social innovation storytelling, is distinguished by bottom-up actions. Citizens and members take on the structure of a multi-actor network. Instead, the latter proceeds with top-down mode from both private and public actors, mainly with philanthropic aims. Such actors have a role of agency, banishing the reuse of the infrastructure for new projects of general interest.

The various types of activation of the processes have an effect also on the characteristics of promoting subjects. The first grouping consists of actions undertaken by indi-

vidual and collective subjects, within an informal, as well as minimum formal and organizational structure context. No doubt, the second grouping is larger, including organizational subjects, both public and nonprofit that draft a project of reuse of community assets each. The remaining grouping consists of networking actors, most of which is composed of different subjects, involving nonprofit institutions and businesses.

Whereas, when going from the promotion to the management of the project of the infrastructure, the framework considerably changes. As a result of the development of organizational structure, the informal element (linked to collective actions carried out by groups of citizens) diminishes. On the other hand, the networking aspect grows, both among subjects of the third sector, and between them and other for-profit actors. When it comes to the management entrusted to a single organizational subject, the role of the TS is reinforced.

In a rather diversified framework, both regarding processes and promoting and managing subjects, the mission of the social regeneration initiative is quite univocal. Indeed, promotion and social cohesion goals prevail, through the implementation of new collaboration strategies among citizens, and between them and public and private institutions that persist in the social-economic context.

Looking at initiatives that were actually carried out, the first and prevailing regards the cultural production and protection, working as driving force of many social regeneration endeavors. Next to it, the social and health sector is noteworthy, to which the niches of the educational and social housing can be traced. Whereas, the fields related to social economic contexts as the touristic-environmental and social agriculture, play a secondary role.

#### **4. Synopsis of two case studies**

The selection of the aforementioned cases was based on the comparison of two initiatives selected because they have in common the type of action - regeneration of unused spaces - but opposed at the organizational level - Controvento is a social cooperative while Ex-Asilo Filangieri is an informal social movement. Two initiatives are

The initiatives are placed at the antipodes of an analytic continuum to which extremities are positioned the ideal purposes of the politic protest or advocacy and the provision and sale of services. On the one hand, the action of the social co-operative Controvento in Forte Marghera is placed at the far end supporting a specific category (disabled persons and/or disadvantaged). On the other hand, the social movement Ex-Asilo

Filangieri is placed at the far end of the political protest and advocacy for art and culture workers. The theory hereby developed analyses on how two different organizations active in the management of a community asset could foster the understanding of trends common to TS organizations. Both cases have been studied through the analysis of documents, the reading of other scholars' contributions, and interviews to the protagonists of both cases, carried out in January and February 2019.

#### *4.1. The social cooperative Controvento at Forte Marghera in Venice*

Forte Marghera is an ancient and big military fort, constructed in the XIX century by the Austrian power. It occupies an area of 50 hectares, property of the Municipality of Venice. The Municipality bought it from the State and, in 2004, was entrusted to the European Group of European Interest (Gruppo Economico di Interesse Europeo – GEIE) within the Marco Polo System. In 2015, the fort was entrusted yet again to the Forte Marghera Foundation, an entity created by the Municipality “with the aim to study and promote the cultural and natural heritage of local, usually part of the neglected military heritage, in particular of the real estate portfolio of Forte Marghera” (Art. 2 “Aim” Statute).

At present, it is considered as a monument and public park, hosting a study center, Forte Marghera Foundation, as well as various expositive spaces (some of them entrusted to the “Biennale di Venezia” that sets up exhibitions and events within their annual calendar), and public bars. Three of these bars – Il Gatto Rosso, Il Bagolaro and La Dispensa – are managed by Controvento, a social cooperative of type B (a particular type of social cooperative provided for by Italian legislation employing disabled and disadvantaged people). As says Alberto «we arrived in Forte Marghera as a cultural association with the central theme of concerts and events and linking the cultural project to the management of a bar and catering. When we arrived, the spaces of Forte Marghera were ruined and abandoned and previously other for-profit entrepreneurs of the city had misinterpreted these spaces. When we came to see them, we felt like we saw a tailor-made dress. It was the year 2010, the first summer season of programming. The citizens enthusiastically welcomed the project and and we had the satisfaction of being able to return these spaces to the city. This situation broke out into our hands: the first season was a great success, so already in 2011 (spring 2011) we wondered what was the most suitable form of enterprise to do all this. When you start to spin a considerable economy the association form is not enough, so we decided to become a cooperative».

The effect of this tension on organizational change suggests a further evolutionary step, that is the possible enucleation of a function, and perhaps also of an internal unit or of a possible incubator spin-off, ie aimed at carrying out actions of animation and support for development initiatives on a local basis. It refers to an incubator that works, as in the case of welfare - undercover, or nesting within the cultural activities and economies that represent what can now be defined as the core business of the cooperative. «The objective of returning this space to citizens has placed the social mission at the foundation of the entrepreneurial project. Therefore, it is right for us to be a company that is on the market but also in which the social aspect must be absolutely relevant. Our great challenge is to combine ethical principles, quality of work - which for us is to cook and administer good food - and to be able to impose on the market this way of doing business» (Alberto).

The social cooperative Controvento, without giving up a solid and deep-rooted political and cultural dimension, which takes the form of numerous initiatives in which issues are conjugated cultural production and civic values such as solidarity and social justice, is very capable on the business plan. The distinctive feature of the cooperative is this attempt to combine political and cultural objectives and a solid company condition. Their close relationship with the local associations is another feature of the organization: «I believe that this is the true nature of the social cooperative. The relationship with youth and cultural associations was born linked to cultural events and a bit linked to the fact that we too were an association before becoming a cooperative. In addition, our staff allows us to do so and so we tried to respond to the city by creating a small network of young people, associations, informal and musical groups. It was also for us a way of return something that we had been given» (Alberto).

Thanks to this mix, the cooperative over the years has made a major contribution to the reorganization and refurbishment of spaces, for example by enhancing through events and initiatives the waterfront of Forte Marghera, which has now become the official venue for cultural events and a public place (a Bar), or assuming the maintenance of some buildings that have become the seat of associations and cultural projects. «We are about 100 workers in the summer, of which 70 members of the cooperative. Primary activity is management of bars and restaurants at Forte Marghera. In 2014 we started a new project, born because we were looking for a farm to produce the food to cooking and so we opened in Friuli Venezia Giulia a farm and natural park» (Alberto).

The organizational culture of social cooperatives, based on strong relations with the local communities (Borzaga and Ianes 2006), develops a place-based approach in the action of the cooperative Controvento. On the other hand, this same symbiotic link

with the space of Forte Marghera reveals a sort of monopoly of the dimension of place developed by the cooperative. It could, therefore, generate a sort of "centripetal effect" compared to the possibilities of expansion, thus limiting the possibility of developing a development strategy on a multilevel scale.

During these years, the relationship between the cooperative Controvento and the space of Forte Marghera has been transformed into a symbiosis: space is the cooperative and the cooperative is the space. This does not mean that the cooperative is not known also for the management of the other spaces that over time has managed (the park of San Floriano and the restaurant La Pergola), but the activity of the cooperative is Forte Marghera. This fact is well represented, even physically, by the location of the administrative headquarters at the building that served as the concierge of the fort, which welcomes visitors at their entrance.

This symbiosis with space makes Controvento a sort of island independent from the rest of the local ecosystem of the third sector and of social cooperation. The cooperative provided that it is guaranteed the influx of people at its premises, is indifferent to the rest of the social-economic system, with which it does not need to compete (and work) in the distribution of public or philanthropic funds and tender system.

Despite this condition, the cooperative Controvento has developed a system of collaborative relationships with some social, cultural and local organizations, becoming also a supporter or financier in some cases of projects proposed by young people of the territory. In this sense, the cooperative assumes, once again, characteristics typical of "community hub" rooted within a defined socio-economic context, rather than as a node of a consortium network that acts as back-office support functions (eg services, general contractor, representation) as typically happens in the field of social cooperation.

Faced with this development framework, we can identify some challenges, both internal and external, that will probably characterize the evolution of Controvento in the short/medium term.

- First of all the need to reconcile the investment intensity in terms of new initiatives and activities in the place of origin with the uncertainty of the contracts of assignment of this same space. These are in fact contracts subject to frequent renewals and therefore in contrast with the business plan both with long-term investments and with the identification between the place and the company. From this point of view, devices of coverage and co-planning that, albeit with difficulty, are affirming not only in the field of social policies, could represent a useful mechanism to reconcile this need for stabilization in order to strengthen the typically entrepreneurial propensity investment.

- Secondly, it seems to emerge the need to create a more composite organizational entity in its internal structuring, better able to process the diverse and complex nature of the activities carried out and which now represent the classic "modus operandi" Controvento. In this sense, the forecasts of the recent regulatory reform on the subject of the third sector and of social enterprise can be an inspiration for a redesign of the organization and governance, but other regulatory devices could also be considered as a benefit society and cultural enterprises. These, although they are not of non-profit origin, however, may represent items of interest, given the divergent nature, at least in part, Controvento compared to this same field of "social".

- Finally, we can point out the need for Controvento to further densify its reference ecosystem by looking not only at "km 0", linked to its dimension of place that corresponds to the spaces of the Fort but also by strengthening links with communities of practice and inter-network organizations focused on the theme of common goods and social regeneration of spaces operating at national and international level (Montanari and Mizzau 2016).

#### *4.2 Ex-Asilo Filangieri in Naples*

Asilo Filangieri is a historic palace at the heart of the city of Naples. In the XVI century, it was the seat of a craftsmanship factory, whereas after the II World War it became a boarding school, to finally be abandoned after 1980. In 2012, a movement that identified common goods as a resource for cultural production arose within the framework of national performance workers' mobilization against cuts to cultural funds. It is from this background which a collective, made up of cultural and performance workers named 'La Balena', occupied the property. Thanks to a resolution (400/2012) of the Municipality, the pilot nature of the occupation has been acknowledged. A plausible path to undertake would have been one of direct entrustment. However, the members of 'La Balena', proposed to overcome basic administrative solutions in order to transform their conflict into a broader consideration upon the use of common assets and civic use, defining a collective use of assets destined to public usufruct. Compared to more traditional administrative mediation forms between property and public use, the civic use introduces not only the community element, but also the responsibility towards an inclusive and open use. In 2015, the Municipality of Naples took on the management commitments of the former Asilo Filangieri, thus clarifying its civic and collective function. In 2016, a new resolution acknowledged and legitimized civic communities' occupations of abandoned places (Laino 2017). This setup is included within the

'Declaration for civic use of the Asilo' (Dichiarazione d'uso civico dell'Asilo), and it is defined by legal experts and scholars as a form of (public) management through a third part (citizens). This type of setup is still subject to debate among legal experts, policy makers and community assets experts. Also, it allowed the creation of a "community of residents in the Asilo", living in self-government through assembly. A plural subject - the community of art and cultural workers deciding to share means and competences - transforms a municipal property into a common asset through the tool of civic and collective uses. All of this produces a new way of relations, as well as of production (Capone 2018). For the residents of the Asilo, this radically innovative form of management was the only possible management, because any other administrative solution by the Municipality would have represented a shortcut. A shortcut that would have undermined the principle of "institutional openness" as the cornerstone through which trying to avoid the transformation of a place into a property for few people, and keeping it as an open and plural resource. The radically innovative management proposed by the Asilo, has been hard to achieve («Tormented but beautiful», Viviana) and it created moments of high conflict with the Municipality. Conflict which has been resolved thanks to the political choice of the mayor De Magistris who was won over by this model as an alternative to the most widespread («They accepted the challenge, we said: "our way or no way at all"», Nicola). «For us, it is not a contradiction, we are looking for permeability and openness. What I would like to add is that, more than a contradiction, it is a risk we are taking. We are aware of the risk, but without it we would not have reason to exist» (Viviana). The combination between administrative solution and model of management through assembly, transforms the Asilo into a metabolism in which nobody can enter unless involved. As a result, it is a warranty towards improper and self-serving uses of the space: «how do you establish the openness? A good dose of spontaneity is not enough, there is the need for a technique. Then, what technique to establish the openness: this is enriching what I call social and creative metabolism of the Asilo. Namely, to maintain the openness, you need to create a very strong context of relations, where the context is formed by assemblies and boards» (Nicola).

Although the activities of the Asilo are very similar to those carried out by other cultural spaces, what differentiates them is the planning and model of management through which they are implemented. Article 3 of the "Declaration for civic use of the Asilo" determines that the participation to the running of the Asilo is free, and those interested to carry out any activity, can expose it to the Assembly of Management or to the Thematic Boards of Organization. Article 4, distinguishes among residents, guests and consumers. The first category gathers the active and regular participants to the care and management of the space for at least three months. In addition to that, they

present a formal request to the Assembly. The guests are those who propose an activity then scheduled by the assembly, or who temporarily use a space. Finally, the consumers are all those users who participate to the activities proposed by the public. The self-government organs (Capo III, art. 7-13 of the "Declaration") are as follows: the Assemblies of direction and management, discussing and defining the general guidelines and ordinary activity management; the Thematic Boards of Organization, who program and schedule the activities; and the Guarantors' Committee acting as guarantee organs in case of internal disputes. Article 15 of the Declaration establishes that "the civic use of the Asilo is inspired by the principles of self-government, cooperation and mutual assistance. Moreover, it tends to reinforce the individual and collective set of responsibilities during the process of activity planning". Together, such principles outline a model of management which combines petitions and goals of individuals and communities. Furthermore, regular reports made by the Assembly underscore its productivity: 200.000 presences in 4 years, more than 2000 artists involved, 190 assemblies, 830 roundtables with around 18.000 attendances. Economic sustainability is still an open issue within the Asilo experience. At present, according to the interviewees, the substantial absence of 'income produced by the Asilo' represents one of the reasons of the effectiveness of their assembly model of management. From their point of view, it is unlikely to function if the participants to the Asilo were to earn an income: «The question of income and self-income was discussed among some of us — for instance, among the group of communication that was overworked — however, we could never face the economic issue on a completely peaceful environment. Rules are originated from practices, but we do not agree in a specific economic structure of the Asilo yet» (Viviana). So far, those conducting the workshops in the Asilo are assigned with a small form of allowance in the form of 'relief', namely «you take a loss but you earn from it» (Nicola). This happened because tension and conflict was the result of the creation of new incomes, and new typical schemes of division of work. Insofar, «indirect forms of income» represented the solution (Nicola), that is to say, the use of economic resources gathered for infrastructures and for the purchase of means of production have been made available to the community of the Asilo. Moreover, its members, especially cultural workers, could use them to generate income outside the Asilo: «you are not paid, but you cut your production costs» (Nicola). So, why choose to hold a workshop in the Asilo? «Despite the space being complimentary, you meet people and create fantastic professional meetings. Many workshops come to life at the Asilo, to continue then in traditional venues, where you are paid» (Viviana). In this process, the non-economic dimension of the Asilo generates economic opportunities. That is to say, firstly the production is social, only later it becomes economic.



A unique aspect of the Asilo experience, which links it to the Milan experience of Macao, is the intense reflectiveness in the action. In the past years, the former Asilo Filangieri has been observed, analyzed, studied and described. Several academic and didactic publications told its story and the self-government forms. This activity was not produced by external actors, but by persons directly implied in the Asilo project and who had a crucial - activist - role in developing this practice of research-action. The figure of Nicola Capone (and Emanuele Braga for Macao, or Marco Baravalle for Sale Docks) is representative of a very strong connection between research and action: knowledge is produced in action, as well as action through forms of research that mobilize a kind of intellectual activism (Contu 2018).

Research is not only functional to design more effective and efficient organizational solutions (or process or product innovations), but also oriented to continue questioning the coherence of the relationship between goals and means (Busacca 2018). The reflexive vocation is the institution of the Asilo experience itself because it becomes a fundamental level of that process of continuous learning that Asilo produces.

First of all, the success of the Asilo is determined by the care of relationships, understood not only in an effective sense, but also in a productive one: «Our goal is not to incubate, but to create a human work environment, of which incubation is a side effect. We create human environments, where even just the fact that when I smile at everyone, even if I have never seen them before, creates a certain kind of atmosphere, attitude, and approach to everyday life because, at the end of the day, life is made of everyday life» (Viviana). Even the use of new technologies is respectful of this humanity. Relationships are the place where knowledge is produced as a consequence of continuous evaluation processes, intentionally promoted to continuously verify the coherence between objective, means, and actions.

The Asilo is like an archer: «It has a blurred goal: cooperation, intersections, interdependence, that is to create anti-systemic spaces. In order to keep anti-systemic spaces open, you need strategies and techniques and there is also that art of adjusting the shooting (...) the Asilo is a form of cooperative learning» (Nicola). Moreover, the Asilo gives attention to the publication and dissemination of the many articles produced on the topic of the Asilo itself by some of its inhabitants. It is the result of a learning process born within a conflict between the inhabitants and some of them who are active as researchers and committed in many visible publications.

The network of Asilo relations is wide and multilevel. On the one hand, there are the other common asset spaces of Naples, with which the community of the Asilo shares a path of reflection and co-planning with the Municipality of Naples. On the other hand, there is the network of occupied theaters from which the national movement was born

in 2011. All in all, there is a broad galaxy of more or less antagonistic organizations, still involved in the debate on common assets and civic and collective uses. The relationship with the other Neapolitan spaces - with which the Asilo has collaborated to obtain recognition as common assets - is fundamental, so much so that it becomes an organizational practice that translates into almost weekly meetings during which the questions and solutions are discussed and pooled together to become a collective heritage.

## **5. Findings from the nesting**

The nesting process of the study allows us to make some discoveries that offer cues for interpretation of the transformations taking place in the TS. The ISTAT data show that the organizations of the TS, regardless of their vocation to employment or voluntarism, appear increasingly characterized by elements of publicness and are committed to activities of management of community assets. These trends are confirmed in the case studies proposed by the major studies published in Italy on community asset. The two in-depth case studies in this paper confirm the same trend.

Both are based on a mix of state resources (preferential concessions, coverage of management charges), market activities (sales, administration, space rental) and non-market trading (voluntary, commodity exchange, time bank).

However, closer observation highlights that behind this apparent resemblance, the two spaces present completely different management models: by organizational structure, by the different balancing of advocacy and publicness.

### *5.1. Community asset and social innovation*

The recovery processes and functionalization of regenerated spaces also occur through dialectical elements and conflict with existing institutions and communities, thus regaining a critical approach to social innovation (Moulaert, Van der Broeck, and Manganelli 2017). Therefore, the study of the relationship between TS and management of community assets brings out the "context-dependent" character of social innovation.

The impact of a broader institutional context, socio-economic, cultural, environmental, is dependent on the ability to absorb and revise content, context, practices, and cultures. So, the character of the innovation must not be considered in an absolute sense, but rather in reference to the ability of subjects able to receive and generate

change while keeping a close connection to their identity structure, without undermining its foundations, as in our case of TS.

The in-depth cases help us to understand that social innovation is the satisfaction of human needs through the transformation of social relationships: they are changes that affect the governance systems that guide and govern the allocation of goods and services to meet those needs and establishing new structures of governance and new organizational forms. When TS gives life to this kind of processes, it uses spatial density, working as a catalyst to reveal alternatives to collective action models. Social innovation as context-dependent phenomenology can be read and accompanied along three different guidelines.

The first one is sociality understood as inclusion, that is to increase the connections and relations between "citizens/inhabitants" through new spaces of sociability open to a multiplicity of uses: they are practices that regenerate sociality and that, in many cases, through these relationships they are also able to produce real symbolic and material services. The second one is generativity, understood as the ability to activate the inhabitants, their expressive potentials, increasingly neglected in an era dominated by the symbolic.

The experiences presented in the Paper are practices in which the know-how, no longer hindered by the pressure of competitiveness and from the obsessiveness of series production, begins to re-emerge and be shared.

The third line of place-based social innovation is sustainability, referring both to the profile of hybrid organizations that incorporate a constitutively social entrepreneurship - as based on a mix of resources (economic and in kind, market, and donations), and the ability to reuse those resources that are not the same for mainstream production and consumption models and therefore are to be treated as obsolete or waste goods. This potential for social innovation, that characterizes the initiatives described in the Paper, does not rule out some contradictions. The first and perhaps most important of all is that goods, and services that generally Asilo and Forte Marghera produce, are simultaneously produced in these practices: club goods, ie available to specific categories of individuals or organizations; collective goods, that is, available to collectivities that recognize themselves in a community; public, available to all. The interesting aspect of this mix is that it is not closely related to economic reasons but rather to organizational effectiveness mechanisms, which add to the multiplication of social-relational setting a greater ability to design and test solutions to organizational problems. The second contradiction is related to the relationship between profitability and influence of these initiatives, which are to construct models of "fundamental economy" in terms of Cohesion value as an outcome of policy-making processes that are reaching full ma-

turity in different contexts to replace neo-liberal ideas (Barbera, Dagnes, Salento, and Spina 2016). Although these experiences continue to be marginal and minor, they are shaping up to be an emerging form of public policy-making, ie dealing with problems that are perceived as problems in common.

The original aspect is that compared to the traditional specialization on individual problems or areas of the third sector, these experiences define areas of multiproblem intervention and create an innovative interweaving of problems and solutions, where the treatment of a problem can produce a solution of another as a byproduct problem.

## *5.2. Divergences and convergences*

The two case studies present some important divergences. The first divergence relates to the form of the organisational model. Controvento is a social cooperative with a high level of formalization of organizational processes, roles and functions of its members, resulting in decision-making processes and evaluation of results that are codified and formalized. Ex-Asilo Filangieri is an informal group of people with a few written rules, whose behaviors are defined by a code of conduct that indicates the direction to follow. The rules of the group are outlined during the management of activities through informal mechanisms based on trust between members of the group, where the roles and functions change frequently between and where the decision-making processes follow a written code.

The second divergence is related to the relationship between economic results and social impact. In the case of Controvento social impacts are subordinated to economic sustainability and market activities, through which social impacts are pursued. Ex-Asilo Filangieri excludes market activities within the framework of initiatives promoted in space but are allowed outside of it, also using the group's resources and instruments, as a sort of reward for the voluntary work offered. Consequently, another difference between the two initiatives is that in the case of Controvento the activists of the initiative are members and workers of the cooperative, in the case of Ex-Asilo Filangieri they are voluntary members of the group.

The two in-depth case studies present also significant convergences, which can represent useful learning and a possible knowledge base that can be generalized to other third sector organizations. The first issue is related to the choice of organizational form and its relationship with the organization's mission itself. The main empirical analyzes on the non profit sector describe the choice of the organization form as a beginning step of the entrepreneurial process, formulated to maximize the opportunities for suc-

cess and mainly based on legal and regulatory criteria. This situation has led to numerous placement problems for TS entities characterized by strong hybridization (Venturi and Zandonai 2014) and for high-vocational for-profit organizations (Sabeti 2011), to the point that Young, Searing, and Brewer (2016) described this situation as 'the social enterprise zoo'. The two in-depth case studies show that the perspective is reversed: the chosen organizational plan is the result of the goals and opportunities that are determined in the course of interactions with other local actors in an effort to reach the target. However, the analysis could be extended to many of the cases that make up the emerging database presented in 3.2. Controvento and Asilo choose the respective organizational forms in an opportunistic way because they represent the most compatible solutions with the local context where the managing process of the collective asset takes place. This trend suggests that the achievement of the mission, in this third sector segment, is predominant compared to other factors, thus representing an element of radical innovation in comparison to the historical tendency of the TS, about a substantial alignment between the mission and the organizational form.

The second area of convergence is related to the collaborative or cooperative models adopted by these organizations, for which this operating principle represents a distinctive and qualifying element with a view to a different form of integration between society and economy. For a long time, the dominant model of development has been based on the social integration into the economy, meaning that these practices attribute to their collaborative or cooperative nature an opposite form of integration (Pais and Provasi 2015). The communities of co-producers or co-workers that animate the two case studies are deeply differentiated by their nature - they are divided into inhabitants, guests, and users in Asilo. In Forte Marghera, they are divided into members, staff members, and workers, but in both cases, the collaborative model they adopt is strongly run by a management body that inserts hierarchical and leadership processes in organizations that declare, in horizontal and in peer to peer production, their elements of innovation and success.

The third point of convergence is represented by the substantial disappearance of the conflictual dimension in the action reconstructed in the two case studies. The antagonistic and conflictual political potential of the two initiatives hereby reconstructed, which has an important position in their intentions and in their protagonists' statements, tends to decrease very substantially. As a result, the sterilization process of the conflict takes place at several levels (Busso and Gargiulo 2017). The first level is related to the nature and objectives of the TS, and to these organizations in particular. In their documents and interviews, the reflexivity dimension does not emerge, on the contrary, they consider their own actions as good in themselves, to be assessed only on the basis

of the ability to achieve the desired goals. That is to say, they are assessed for their effectiveness rather than for their quality. The second level regards discursive practices, mainly characterized by a reflection on the capacity for innovation, sustainability, the inclusion of regeneration, and so on. However, the criticism of local government processes, corporate and associative practices of parts of the TS (or other political and economic actors, - characteristic features of the emergence seasons of the Italian TS as a political, economic and social actor), almost completely disappears. The third level is the internal one, where organization and government strategies run to limit the potential conflict of the other members of the organization. The Declaration of Civic Use of Asilo, the Statute of Controvento and the Convention between Controvento and Forte Marghera Foundation can be read and presented by the same protagonists of the two experiences as elements of prevention of internal conflict, as well as non-conflictual forms of relationship with the local authorities owning the two buildings.

## **6. Conclusions**

We think that there are specific benefits to be gained by deploying both statistical analysis and qualitative tools simultaneously, and in this section we emphasize the benefits of distinct complementarities rather than advocating a single style of research. The interest in both the exploration of general relationships and the specific explanations of individual cases and groups of cases characterizes nested analysis.

The analyses proposed in this article offered interesting learning elements. The intersection between the fields of study that are represented, on the one hand, by the social regeneration of spaces and buildings as community assets and, on the other, by the TS (particularly from the comparison between its more markedly entrepreneurial component and the non-market-oriented component), offer cognitive, strategic and political findings. The regeneration may in fact not simply be treated as yet another "industry" activities of social organizations, but it is rather a vast and complex ecosystem in which they develop initiatives where the transversal elements of context and organizational hybridization represent a structural component. On the other hand, the third sector that acts in this context seems to assume connotations of "enterprising community" that, paradoxically, represent a sort of "return to the future" compared to a recent evolution that instead led him to operate in a large part as a low cost subcontractor of the Public Administration (Barbera et al., 2016). In short, social regeneration is confirmed as one of the most interesting fields of social innovation to observe (Mou-

laert et al., 2017) also (and above all) as regards the ambivalences that feed elements of dialectics and conflict.

In this regard, the following points summarize the main tensions in this sense, as they arise in particular from the two case studies.

- *Advocacy vs codesign*: the investigated initiatives present the co-design processes as a strategy to address the need to represent and protect rights and social needs, overcoming the classic approach of supplying finished goods and services and focusing above all on co-production models (Pestoff 2012).
- *Reliance vs co-design*: the administration of goods and services of public interest are mainly characterized by means of allocating based on market criteria that segmenting the offer in performance based on rationality means/ends elements. On the other hand, the rhetoric of the co-design is not free from critical issues mainly related to the sharing of knowledge and know-how among different subjects that may be competing with each other, as well as to equip themselves with complex information systems able to provide a real support for the planning and execution of joint activities (Gallo 2018).
- *Self-management vs shared administration*: the dimension of the governance of infrastructures qualified as "common assets" is subject to elements of tension, clearly visible in the investigated experiences, which concern, on the one hand, direct management through a transfer of ownership of the asset (or assimilated provision) in favor of the commoners, on the other hand, a model of shared administration that accepts the rules of the game that are more oriented to elements of coverage with the public subject (Bombardelli 2016).
- *Adaptability vs replicability*: the growth patterns of social regeneration experiences are subjected to a stress field that sees, on the one hand, the search for greater entrenchment locally focusing mainly on the diversification of activities and direct involvement of citizens and of local communities. On the other hand, you can affirm, even in this same field, development models more oriented to replicate models of service and economy on a wider scale, accepting inter-dialogue with subjects able to provide resources and skills outside the strictly local dimension. The field of social impact finance represents, from this point of view, a very relevant and contradictory indicator in this sense (Calderini and Venturi 2018).

These elements of tension have been deliberately represented as contradictions to exasperate their character, not only oppositional but also generative. In conclusion, it is from these elements of tension that further research paths can emerge and, at the same time, projects able to gather the main challenge of developing these initiatives,

that is to build a *political-strategic mezzanine* able to climb social innovations “context-dependent” (Ruckstuhl, Lipparini, and Addarii 2015).

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