

If not for profit,
for what and how?

S O C I A L
E N T E R P R I S E

Social entrepreneurship and confiscated mafia properties in Italy

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s and 1990s new entrepreneurial dynamics emerged in the third sector as response to the challenges of modern socio-economic context. Indeed, social enterprises arose primarily in response to social needs not adequately met, or not met at all, by public services or for profit enterprises (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001). That is because they provide goods and services which the market or public sector is unwilling or unable to provide. In the European context, the process of institutionalization of social enterprises has often been closely linked to the evolution of public policies, especially considering the structural unemployment and the need to reduce state budget deficits (Defourny, Nyssens, 2010). In this sense, the entrepreneurship policy has been characterized by measures that promote the transition from unemployment to self-employment, used as a tool to actively intervene in the labor market (Román et al., 2013). For example, in many countries, there has been a significant development of specific public programs designed to promote social enterprise in the field of work integration (the so-called WISEs). As pointed out by Defourny and Nyssens (2010), the main objective of “work integration social enterprises” is to help low-qualified unemployed people, who are at risk of permanent exclusion from the labour market. The mission of the WISEs is to integrate these people into work and society through a productive activity.

In this paper we consider these social enterprises, although they are only a particular type of a broader universe in which the boundaries between profit and non-profit organizations are not always so clear or become attenuated (Dees, 1998; Ramus and Vaccaro, 2012; Peredo and McLean, 2006). In particular, we refer to *social cooperatives* that provide work integration for disadvantaged people at risk of social exclusion (the «B-type social cooperatives» according to Italian law of 1991). Our intent is to examine this expression of entrepreneurship in a specific context, taking into account the wider social value that is generated by the creation of such enterprises for the reuse of assets confiscated from the Mafia. Recently, we have witnessed in Italy new forms of entrepreneurship by virtue of a specific law passed by the Parliament in 1996. This law provides for the use of goods and estates confiscated to organized criminality for social aims. These goods can be assigned, among different subjects, to social cooperatives involving disadvantaged people to carry on different activities (production, farm holidays, etc.). So in the last decade, particularly in the Italian Southern areas, many entrepreneurial activities have arisen (Fondazione Libera Informazione, 2009) and thanks to them it has been possible to generate employment and to increase social, cultural and economic development of whole lands.

This study aims to focus on the creation process (Bygrave, Hofer, 1991; Churchill, Muzyka, 1994) of social cooperatives operating on confiscated mafia properties aiming to underline the role performed by a lot of involved actors. In particular, the paper intends to study the relational network originating these enterprises (actors, everybody's roles and contribution), showing the factors that support this kind of entrepreneurship and difficulties to overcome for its diffusion in the country.

For this purpose, the paper is structured along the following lines. In the first part, we analyze the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship and the contribution it makes to the community, presenting the definition of social enterprise assumed here and some distinctive features of social cooperatives. In the second part we describe the evolution of the Italian institutional context and the emergence of these new forms of social entrepreneurship. The third part deals with the process of creation of social cooperatives within the project «Libera Terra» promoted by *Associazione Libera* (proponent of the law). A case of entrepreneurship in a specific territorial context will be presented with a qualitative approach adopting the representative *single case* method (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, we refer to the creation of an agrarian cooperative in Sicily working in the lands confiscated to mafia, an important example of this phenomenon because it is the first entrepreneurial experience realized in Italy. In the remaining part of the study we discuss the case, highlighting the critical issues identified and their policy implications, and then we conclude with some final remarks.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section we consider briefly the social entrepreneurship literature referring particularly to studies which underline the contribution to the local development. Since the meanings attributed to the term "social enterprise" are various, we clarify the meaning considered here, and then we focus on social cooperatives placing emphasis on their mission.

2.1. Social entrepreneurship and its contribution to the community

Social entrepreneurship, commonly defined as "entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose" (Austin et al., 2006), has become an important economic phenomenon at a global scale (Mair and Martí, 2006; Zahra et al., 2008; Kerlin, 2010; Santos, 2012). Although social entrepreneurs usually start with small initiatives, they often target problems that have a local expression but global relevance, such as the health of people, the social services or re-integration of individuals into the workforce.

Over the past two decades, this emerging theme has attracted a growing attention among researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Although it was pointed that the language may be new but not the phenomenon as there have always been social entrepreneurs even if they were not so called (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurship has been the subject of considerable interest in the academic literature, devoting also special issue of scientific journals (Christie and Honig, 2006). This comes from the critical role it plays in addressing social problems and enriches the community and society. Some scholars have examined the potential of social entrepreneurship to address social problems and explored its implications for wealth creation and local development (Austin et al., 2006; Borzaga, Defourny, 2001; Seelos and Mair, 2005). Social enterprises provide goods and services which the market or public sector is unwilling or unable to provide, creating employment and enhancing civil public involvement (Smallbone et al., 2001, cited in Cornelius et al., 2008). Furthermore, such enterprises combat social exclusion and revitalise deprived areas, having significant relationship with local community (Borzaga, Zandonai, 2009). Others scholars have underlined that social entrepreneurship also offers innovative solutions to complex and persistent social problems by adopting business models and market-oriented models (Peredo and McLean, 2006; Spear, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009). Consistent with this idea, in several studies it is emphasized that the social entrepreneur acts as an agent of change (Dees, 1998; Mair and Martí, 2006; Sharir and Lerner, 2006). According to Dees (1998) social entrepreneurs make fundamental changes in the way things are done in the social sector, attacking often the cause of problems and reducing the needs. So they have a fundamental role in the functioning of modern society, identifying neglected problems with positive externalities and developing mechanisms to incorporate these externalities into the economic system (Santos, 2012).

Though a modern movement for social enterprise appears to be developing simultaneously in many places around the world, there are important regional differences as concerning what the term means (Kerlin, 2010). In addition, different people often attribute to the term "social entrepreneurship" different meanings, a fact which has led some authors to explore the definitional issues (Dees, 1998; Peredo and McLean, 2006; Mair and Martí, 2006; Certo and Miller, 2008). Inspired by the thought of Say, Schumpeter, Drucker and Stevenson, Dees (1998) argues that social entrepreneurs are a kind of entrepreneurs and emphasizes the role of change agent in the social sector. Describing a set of distinctive behaviors, the author shows that the social entrepreneur adopts a mission to create and sustain social value. Mair and Martí (2006) view social entrepreneurship as a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs. The focus is on the creation of social value, while economic value creation is considered as necessary condition to ensure financial viability. Peredo and McLean (2006: 56) propose instead a flexible explanation of the concept of social entrepreneurship. They claim that social entrepreneurship is exercised where some person or group (1) aim either exclusively or in some

prominent way to create social value of some kind and pursue that goal through some combination of (2) recognizing and exploiting opportunities to create this value, (3) employing innovation, (4) tolerating risk and (5) declining to accept limitations in available resources. According to Certo and Miller (2008) social entrepreneurship involves the recognition, the evaluation and the exploitation of opportunities that result in social value as opposed to personal or shareholder wealth. Social value involves the fulfillment of basic and long-standing needs of society, providing goods or services to those who need them. The authors point out that the focus is on the creation of social value.

There is a broad agreement that social entrepreneurs and their activities are driven by social goals; that is, the desire to benefit society in some way (Peredo and McLean, 2006). In other words, a social entrepreneur aims to increase the “social value” contributing to the welfare in a human community. The social mission is essential and is the key element that distinguishes the social entrepreneurship from other forms of entrepreneurship. Making a profit may be part of the model but it is only a means to achieve a social purpose and to ensure financial sustainability. Consistent with this vision, in this paper we follow the definition of social enterprise elaborated by Network EMES, which clearly explains the basic elements of the topic under consideration. It defines the social enterprise as a private legal entity and independent by the Public Administration, which plays a productive activity according to entrepreneurial logic and directed toward an explicit social purpose, which results in the generation of benefits in favor of a local community or particular disadvantaged people (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001).

The potential of social enterprises to enhance the community capacity and quality of life has been recognized by governments who have sought to both encourage and foster their activities (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010). Our work fits into this perspective as we examine how in Italy it was encouraged the emergence of social cooperatives on confiscated Mafia properties.

2.2. The social cooperatives and their mission

In this paper we focus our attention on social cooperatives, one of the first examples of social enterprise developed in Western Europe (Defourny, Nyssens, 2010; Kerlin, 2010).

Italy, in particular, is characterized by a strong cooperative tradition. Its Constitution recognizes the social function of cooperation of mutualistic character and not for private speculation (art. 45). The first initiatives began to develop at the end of the 70s – as “social solidarity” cooperatives – as a result of a growing gap between social needs and characteristics of public intervention. According to the model of welfare hitherto prevalent, public administration was responsible to manage directly or control the provision of social services (education, health, care, etc.). Italian welfare state had a strong bias in favor of the transfer of monetary resources rather than the provision of services (Borzaga and Santuari, 2001). And so, the cooperatives for the provision of such services have spread. Within a few years they have gained an important role in the Italian third sector (Thomas, 2004) due to their ability to respond in innovative ways to a variegated and unmet demand of social services. This happened because the mutualistic orientation was passed progressively placing more emphasis on the general interest. Indeed, new organizations have been created to serve the community or specific groups of people (other than the founders and operators) (Borzaga and Santuari, 2001; Defourny and Nyssens, 2010). Moreover, social cooperatives have increased the supply of social services, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions.

The development of these initiatives has animated the scientific debate in the early nineties, in which the term “social enterprise” was coined, and has led to the legal recognition of «social cooperatives». In 1991, the Italian Parliament approved the law n. 381, giving visibility to this peculiar enterprise which had an extraordinary growth later. Article 1 of the law states that social cooperatives aim to pursue the general interest of the community to promote human and social integration of citizen through: a) the management of health and social services and educational services; b) the carrying out of different activities – agricultural, industrial, commercial or services – aimed at providing employment for disadvantaged people. The law therefore distinguishes between two types of social

cooperatives: those delivering social, health and educational services, called "A-type social cooperatives", and those providing work integration for disadvantaged people, called "B-type social cooperatives".

Social cooperatives pursue a general interest and the beneficiaries of their action are the Community or particular groups of disadvantaged people (minors, elderly, disabled, unemployed, drug addicts, ex-prisoners, etc.). Herein it lies the difference from the traditional co-operatives with mutualistic goals, which pursue exclusively the owners' interest. Social cooperatives are enterprises with legal personality and their social base may involve different types of stakeholders: working members who receive a remuneration (operators, managers); members who use the services of the cooperatives (elderly, disabled, etc.); members working in the cooperative as a volunteers (which can not represent more than 50% of the total workforce); funding members and public institutions. Social cooperatives are not-for-profit. The qualifying aspect of their activity is the satisfaction of social needs by providing services that neither the State nor private enterprises are able to provide. In the social cooperative it arises, rather, the economic problem of optimizing the limited resources available for the realization of institutional purposes (Propersi and Rossi, 2005). Attention must be paid to the effectiveness and efficiency of the management (Arduini, 1996), as well as on service quality. The profitability is only instrumental to survival in the medium-long term. The Law 381 of 1991 does not prohibit cooperatives to distribute any profits, but imposes specific limits to such distribution. Cooperatives operate in the market according to the business models of private enterprises, or on the basis of special agreements with public institutions (such as the A type cooperatives). By virtue of the greater contact they have with the market and competitive pressures, SCs are "forced" to be more efficient than other NPOs in order to survive (Thomas, 2004).

Social cooperatives are one of the most important expressions of "social entrepreneurship" and make a significant contribution to the community by combating social exclusion (Borzaga and Santuari, 2001). In particular, they deliver services that promote social cohesion by activating human and financial resources for the benefit of the community or particular disadvantaged citizens. Compared to other NPOs embracing the same social aims, SCs can resort more easily to financial markets (Thomas, 2004). Moreover, they can rely on a variety of funding sources rather than the traditional ones (contributions from the public administrations, donations from private enterprises and citizens, as well as from the trade market) (Borzaga and Zandonai, 2009). Being able to use voluntary workers, social cooperatives can select qualified and motivated people attentive to the needs of the community, to service quality and operating efficiency. The labor factor is central to the achievement of the mission because the services provided present an intrinsic relational dimension (Borzaga and Depedri, 2007). Therefore, social cooperatives have the ability to mobilize socio-economic resources underutilized or that would otherwise remain unproductive. Social cooperatives try to increase the existing opportunities and foster innovation in social services. The local roots and close links with the origin community enable cooperatives to understand the specific needs of the citizens and the expectation of the local population. In turn, the possibility to come together in consortiums allows them to benefit from the advantages of large size while maintaining the specialization and contribute, in this way, to the generation of social capital. Social cooperatives thus promote social cohesion and encourage local development through job creation. Borzaga and Santuari (2001) also point out that, thanks to voluntary work, these services help to increase the political awareness about the problems associated with social exclusion. The authors argue that the experience of the Italian social cooperatives shows that it is really possible to create private enterprises that pursue social goals.

Recent opportunities offered by the Italian legislation enrich the content of the social mission of cooperatives, opening up new ways to contribute to the development of the community.

3. EVOLUTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ITALY

In Italy, recently we have witnessed new forms of social entrepreneurship deriving from the civil commitment of association devoted to promote legality values and a more progressive institutional context. In fact, thanks to a popular campaign promoted by *Libera. Associazioni, Nomi e Numeri contro le Mafie*¹ in 1995, the Italian Parliament has passed a law which has an important symbolic value (Frigerio, 2009) and provides for the use of goods and estates confiscated to organized criminality for social aims. These goods can be allotted, among different subjects, to social cooperatives to carry on different activities (agriculture, social services, responsible tourism, etc.), involving also disadvantaged people at the risk of social exclusion (in case of “B-type social cooperatives”).

To comprehend fully the specificities of this entrepreneurial venture it is appropriate to shed light on the origin of this opportunity and the reasons which make it deserving of interest. Everything stems from the widespread and spontaneous movement of rebellion against the Mafia of civil society to the occurrence of the terrible slaughters of 1992, in which the judges Falcone and Borsellino were killed. Citizens, associations, collective subjects of different political orientation, religious and ideal became conscious that the fight against the mafia could not be solved only on the front of repression. It was no longer possible to delegate to others – judges and police – the commitment in combating the proliferation of mafia organizations in Italy. It could and should be done much more in education, promoting a culture of legality among the citizens (Frigerio, 2008), and experiment with alternative models of struggle. It was necessary to break the link between mafia and territory, starting from the economic resources which allowed it to exercise its power contaminating the economy, institutions and society in a vicious circle. Thus the *Associazione Libera* was born. It organized a petition across the country in support of a bill which would allow the social re-use of resources confiscated from the mafia criminality. The sense of the proposal was to use confiscated property for the benefit of the community, enhancing the potential of use and exalting the symbolic value. The campaign slogan was “*la Mafia restituisce il maltolto*” (the Mafia returns the stolen goods) precisely to emphasize the importance of giving back to the community what the mafia had illegally earned by exercising its power. Until then, the confiscated goods pursuant to the Law «Rognoni-La Torre»² were accumulating in the state assets since there were no legislative indications on their use. As a result, some assets even risked of becoming unproductive. The petition had a great success and were collected more than a million of signatures throughout Italy.

Thanks to the efforts of *Associazione Libera* the following year the Italian Parliament approved Law 109 thus accepting the instances of legality and social redemption manifested by civil society. This law states that the goods have to be used for collective purposes, related to the social rehabilitation and to the promotion of a culture of legality. In particular, it provides that the *real property* may be held by the State and used for institutional purposes (justice, public order, civil protection) or transferred to the municipality in which they are located. Then the latter decides whether (a) to administer them directly, or (b) to assign them in concession, free of charge, to communities, institutions, voluntary organizations, social cooperatives, therapeutic communities and rehabilitation centers for drug addicts³.

¹ It is an association founded in 1995 with the aim of enhancing civil society in the fight against mafias and promote legality and justice.

² This law represents a Copernican revolution in the legal system in the matter (Frigerio, 2008) by virtue of the fundamental elements which introduces in fighting organized crime. In particular, the Law 646 of 1982 establishes the crime of «Mafia association» and introduces the seizure and confiscation of assets from the mafia. The law bears the name of Pio La Torre, member of parliament and syndicalist killed by the Mafia that year for having proposed this bill.

³ Movable property (registered or not) flow into financial fund instituted in Prefectures and used for public interest activities (legality education, up of entrepreneurial activities for young unemployed people, etc.). Company assets are transferred to the heritage of the State, which may order the sale, liquidation or the rent to public or private companies, or to cooperatives constituted by ex employees. See Borraccetti et al. (1998).

The importance of this measure has been widely recognized and appreciated, especially for the innovative spirit with which the subject is being addressed after years of stagnation in the process of disposal of confiscated property⁴. These are no longer considered only as resources taken from the mafia (*repressive view*), but also as an opportunity for economic and social development in favor of local communities. For the first time the property confiscated from the mafia organizations become potential flywheels of local economic development and valuable opportunities for the employment of disadvantaged people (La Spina, 2005). The social destination has therefore a great “symbolic value” for the communities marked by the mafia presence. In this way it is possible in such places to reaffirm the presence of the State and the credibility of the institution, promoting the values of legality, justice and honesty at the same time.

The phenomenon is rather significant even in economic terms and quantity. According to data of the Demanio Agency, the confiscated goods from the mafia in January 2013 are about 13.000. Specifically, it is about 11.238 real property and 1.708 companies (www.benisequestraticonfiscati.it). They are mostly concentrated in Southern Italy (around 83%), mainly in Sicily, Calabria, Campania and Puglia. The prudential assessment of such goods would attest to the overall value to about 20 billion euro (Di Maggio, 2012b). The majority of these assets is transferred to the unavailable heritage of Local Authorities (ANBSC, 2011), in order to find appropriate destination after. There is therefore a significant amount of resources that can be re-inserted in the circuit of legal economy and be placed at the service of local communities. The law 109/1996 expressly provides for the possibility to assign the real property to *social cooperatives*, thus promoting social entrepreneurship in the country.

Over the last fifteen years, especially in Southern Italy, but not only, many projects and entrepreneurial activities have been realized (Fondazione Libera Informazione, 2009), and thanks to them it has been possible to develop employment, and tangible services to the local community. The 116 initiatives that are outlined in this research have involved mainly Sicily, Campania, Lazio and Calabria (75% of cases), plausibly for the strong presence in these regions of confiscated goods. Among the social uses the following functions stand out: contrast with social distress, cultural promotion, job placement, production/development.

Italy boasts true excellence in the field of social re-use of confiscated assets, such as the activities carried out within the project “Libera Terra” (Free Land) (Di Maggio, 2012a). In the following paragraphs we will focus on the process of creation of the social cooperatives Libera Terra in order to examine the role played by the different actors involved and to highlight the importance of collaboration between institutions, associations and civil society. The reason for this analysis lies in the implicit assumption that the success of this project derives from the ability of different actors to network around a shared purpose with significant value.

4. CASE STUDY – THE PROJECT “LIBERA TERRA” AND THE CREATION OF AN AGRARIAN COOPERATIVE IN SICILY

4.1. Research methodology

In this section we present a case of social entrepreneurship in a specific territorial context with a qualitative approach adopting the *representative single case* method (Creswell, 2009). The awareness of being in the presence of a relatively recent phenomenon a theory of reference is still emerging for leads us to favor a qualitative research (Eisenhardt, 1989) aimed at understanding the process of creation of social cooperatives and the role played by the plurality of actors involved. The case study method is particularly useful when you want to investigate in depth a contemporary phenomenon in the real context in which it occurs (Yin, 2009).

⁴ From 1982 to 1996 on thousands of goods available only 34 were assigned to new use (Frigerio, 2008).

The case study refers to the project «Libera Terra», a project conceived and coordinated by the Association *Libera*, which today distinguishes itself for the networking of different experiences of social cooperation on property confiscated from the mafia. These are agricultural cooperatives aimed at providing employment of disadvantaged people (type B). Specifically, we will focus on the creation of the cooperative «Placido Rizzotto», an important example of this phenomenon because it is the first entrepreneurial experience realized on the Sicilian country. This case is deemed representative for the following reasons: a) it is the first entrepreneurial experience realized within the Project Libera Terra, b) is the first agricultural cooperative operating on property confiscated established in southern Italy, c) the project for its creation has become "pilot Project" of the Ministry of the Interior - Department of Public Safety, to be implemented in other regions of Italy; d) the cooperative has become a successful business model for the creation of other cooperatives.

The case was developed by combining different methods of data collection (Eisenhardt, 1989), qualitative and quantitative, and resorting to a variety of sources, primary and secondary. In particular, the types of data collected are as follows: i) Italian legislation, ii) documents and information available on the websites of public institutions, local authorities, associations antimafia, associations of cooperatives, local associations and any other actors involved, iii) scientific and popular publications, newspaper articles, iv) interviews and public statements of the representatives of institutions and associations concerned; v) interviews with key informants; vi) corporate documents of the cooperative Placido Rizzotto and the Consortium «Libera Terra Mediterraneo», vii) visit to a confiscated property (participant observation).

To focus our analysis, we adopted a strategy with three steps. In a first step, we reviewed the recent literature on the Mafia and the antimafia. We analyzed the academic literature (Arlacchi, 1986; Gambetta, 1993; Anderson, 1995; Daniel, 2009; Vaccaro, 2012) and documents of journalists and experts on the antimafia (Frigerio, 2008, 2009, Di Maggio, 2011, 2012). This provided detailed preliminary information on the Mafia, its history, the links with the territory and institutions, its impact on local development and civil society in Sicily, and on anti-mafia movement, on Association Libera and its mode of action. In a second step we examined the publicly available data, such as the laws, the relations of institutional bodies responsible for the management of confiscated property, the documents and official communications of the Association Libera, the official statements of the representatives of the associations of cooperatives, newspapers and magazine articles. This step allowed us to acquire more specific information on the role of the different actors involved in the entrepreneurial process. In the third step we carried out the semi-structured in-depth interviews to persons actively engaged in the establishment and initiation of social cooperatives, also acquiring corporate documents. The interviewees are Dr. Umberto Di Maggio, Regional Coordinator of Libera Sicilia, member of the National Office of Confiscated Goods of Libera and member of the Support Bodies in the Prefecture in Sicily, and Dr. Valentina Fiore, Vice President of the Cooperative Placido Rizzotto and General Manager of the Consortium «Libera Terra Mediterraneo». The latter interview was preceded by a visit on the farm, acquiring information about the birth of the cooperative and its activities. During the interviews, which last an hour, we also took notes annotating what is perceived to be relevant.

Our strategy was interactive. From the data analysis we were able to identify additional information to be collected. For example, when we focused on the formation of other social cooperatives we realized that we lacked knowledge about any differences compared with the Placido Rizzotto. The acquisition of data on particular aspects of the phenomenon was suspended when subsequent research did not add any other relevant information and confirmed what already acquired.

With regard to data encoding, we organized all the material collected in text segments based on the levels of analysis, giving a term to each category identified (Creswell, 2009). For example, isolating data and information for each actor considered. During the coding process we thought about the substance of the information but also to its underlying meaning, writing our thoughts in the margin.

The data analysis, aiming to give a meaning to the information collected and codified, was a process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study. Initially, we read all the data to get a general sense of what has been acquired. Then, we analyzed the data for themes trying to develop a rich and detailed description (Stake, 1995) of the entrepreneurial phenomenon, of the events, of the network of actors involved and its evolution.

To be born and live in the Sicilian territory enhances our ability to capture relevant details and profiles of the phenomenon, but also influences the perception of the investigated aspects as well as the vision of the case. Therefore, procedures to ensure the trustworthiness of our research (Shenton, 2004) have been developed. To ensure the internal validity, the strategies employed were: a) triangulation of data from different sources. The data were collected through multiple sources which include analysis of documents, interviews and observation; b) member checking. A dialogue with informants interviewed regarding our personal interpretations of reality and specific descriptions were means of checking the data correctness. External validity was ensured by: a) detailed descriptions of institutional and territorial contexts in which the entrepreneurial opportunity has emerged; b) interviews with key players in the entrepreneurial process, c) near verbatim transcripts of recorded interviews. The reliability of our information was guaranteed by: a) multiple methods of data collection, b) the position of the informants interviewed, c) near verbatim transcripts of recorded interviews.

4.2. The project “Libera Terra” and the case of the cooperative Placido Rizzotto

The context of the entrepreneurial initiative is the *Alto Belice Corleonese*, a territorial area on the south of Palermo, toward the interior of Sicily. An agricultural panorama of ancient memory contributes to the characterization of the landscape. And it is just in these places that “feared mafia bosses like Liggio, Riina, Provenzano and Bagarella were formed at the school of the old mafia of the large estate” (Frigerio, 2008). The valuable resources of the area, natural, artistic, cultural and gastronomic, give it its own identity, recognized by the European Union, the Italian State and the Region of Sicily that have funded development programs since the nineties. The territorial context shows a lag in socio-economic development, with a high unemployment which feeds situations of social distress. Its economic system has elements of structural weakness and the context it was adversely affected by the strong presence of the Mafia crime, which for years “has governed the destiny producing significant social harm and mortifying the enormous potentialities for development” (<http://www.sviluppolegalita.it>).

Many studies highlight the negative impact of the Mafia on local development and economy of enterprises, as well as the costs it imposes on society. In these studies it is shown how the mafia organizations create distortions in the market (Anderson, 1995; Centorrino and Signorino, 1993), impose heavy costs to entrepreneurs and traders with extortion (Costantino and Milia, 2008, Vaccaro, 2012), discourage both local and foreign investments (Daniele and Marani, 2011; Konrad and Skaperdas, 1998; Krkoska and Robeck, 2009), determine a reduction in the rates of economic growth (Arlacchi, 1986; Peri, 2004) and a lower productivity (Felli and Tria, 2000; Centorrino and Ofria, 2008). The presence of the Mafia also signifies fewer job opportunities and notional costs sustained by the society in the form of lost opportunities for development (Daniele, 2009). In addition, there are the negative effects which derive from the infiltration of the mafia into the institutions (Van Dijk, 2007), determining an unfavorable local socio-institutional climate for business activities (Centorrino et al., 1999).

The Libera Terra project intends to restore dignity to the territories oppressed by the Mafia presence with the creation of autonomous firms, self-sufficient and durable, able to give employment and generate an induced positive. In other words, to stimulate a virtuous economic system based on the legality and social justice, ensuring the development of the communities concerned.

The cooperative «Placido Rizzotto» is the first entrepreneurial experience carried out as part of the project. It all began in July 2001, thanks to the Prefect of Palermo and the Consortium of Municipalities "Sviluppo e Legalità", with the publication of a public call for the selection of 15 young unemployed people interested in establishing a cooperative for the management of confiscated lands. The young people selected, after a training period of three months, coordinated by Italy Lavoro S.p.A. constitute the cooperative in November, which the terrains of the Consortium are assigned to (of the Municipalities of Piana degli Albanesi, Corleone, San Giuseppe Jato, San Cipirello and Monreale). The distinctive feature of the activity is the employment of young people with disabilities.

In the following months the headquarters are activated, are put back in gear tractors and sowed the land. And so, the lands confiscated after years of abandonment return to be cultivated. From the beginning it is chosen a method of cultivation biological, thus confirming the social orientation of economic action. Finally, after great sacrifices and various difficulties, in July 2002 there was the first wheat harvest: "Grain of Hope." To the presence of local institutions and national it is reaped the first crop in the land mafia returned to the community. It is a moment of great joy. To record this moment, historical and symbolic, journalists arrived from around the world, BBC, CNN and European TV (Colussi, La Plena, 2002). Since then, the cultivation of land confiscated ensures a variety of agricultural productions and wine that have a positive market response. Over time, other initiatives are grafted on agricultural activity due to new assignments, making the cooperative more active in the area (as shown in Table 1). In addition, interest in this reality opens the way for sightseeing that, since 2004, involving members as cultural mediators (Picciotto, 2012).

The cooperative becomes a successful business model for its ability to combine social instances, economic activity and commitment to the legality, that is why this experience is being replicated in other regions of the South. And so the cooperatives «Valle del Marro» (2004) in Calabria, the «Terre di Puglia» (2008) in Puglia, «The land of Don Beppe Diana» (2010) in Campania, and again, the cooperatives «Pio La Torre» (2007), «Beppe Montana» (2010) and «Rosario Livatino» (2012) in Sicily were born.

Social cooperatives Libera Terra cultivate hundreds of acres of land and currently employ about 150 people. They are members of the Consortium «Libera Terra Mediterraneo», created in 2008 in order to improve the production and marketing of products. Today agricultural raw materials for transformation into agricultural food products are being conferred there. Since organic wheat gathered are produced each year about 1 million pasta packs. To meet the growing demands of the market (Table 1 shows the trend of sales), transfer agreements have been signed with some organic farmers in the area.

Sharing the spirit of the Libera Terra Project, other experiences of cooperation have asked to participate, that is why the brand of quality and legality "Libera Terra" was born by identifying products from the confiscated lands. It is governed by a disciplinary which sets out the requirements of a qualitative nature, social and economic to conform to (Libera Terra, 2007). The products, typical of the region and pursuing excellence, are sold through the distribution networks of the Coop, the shops of Fair Trade and the *Botteghe dei sapori e dei saperi della legalità* (shops of flavors and knowledges of the law).

Table 1 Data on Cooperative Placido Rizzotto (2012) and Consortium Libera Terra Mediterraneo

Cooperative Placido Rizzotto	Data			
Surfaces in production	180 ha			
Agricultural production and agro-alimentary	hard wheat (transformed into biological pasta), legumes, melon, tomato, olive oil, wine			
Other activities in assets under concession	Farm holidays «Portella della Ginestra» and equestrian center «Giuseppe Di Matteo» (2006); wine cellar «Centopassi» (2009)			
Social structure	Working members: 14 Volunteers members: 4 Funding members: 17			
Ordinary workers <i>of which disadvantaged (42%)</i>	27 (21 laborers; 6 administrative employees) 11 (<i>disabled persons</i>)			
Seasonal workers (vary according to needs)	15			
Volunteers of summer camp (July-September)	152			
Contractual situation of the working members	Permanent full time: 9 Permanent part time: 2 Fixed-term employment: 3			
Real property confiscated and granted free of charge in loan for use (L. 109/96)	€ 3.500.536			
Social capital	€ 258.716 (subscribed by funding members: € 120.000)			
Total assets	€ 2.552.285			
Total equity	€ 1.233.749			
Revenues from sales and services	€ 882.691			
Net income	€ 83.105			
Consortium Libera Terra Mediterraneo				
Revenues from sales and services	€ 5.887.232 (2012)	€ 4.758.662 (2011)	€ 4.157.392 (2010)	€ 3.154.712 (2009)
Net income	€ 23.210 (2012)	€ 16.982 (2011)	€ 47.124 (2010)	€ 21.300 (2009)

Source: Corporate documents

There were many difficulties that young people of the cooperative Placido Rizzotto had to face. First, it lacked the funds and agricultural equipment. The cooperative could not get loans from the banking system because, not being property owned, had no real guarantees to offer. Second, there was a difficult relationship with the social fabric of the area. The mafiosi can not bear the affront in any way represented by the subtraction of his own *roba* (things) (Frigerio, 2009), and the members have suffered as a result intimidation and damage. Also the relationship with the local community posed problems. The seasonal laborers refused to work on land confiscated from the mafia bosses for fear of retaliation. For the first wheat harvest the cooperative could not find a combine harvester: nobody had the courage to carry out the work in those lands and make a *sgarbo* (discourtesy) to Riina. It became necessary the intervention of the Carabinieri of Corleone, who commandeered a combine harvester to harvest as soon as possible (Di Maggio, 2013). Despite these difficulties, the young co-operators were not discouraged, engaging with passion for the realization of their project:

"This is our real project. To reach the dignity of labor with our forces, to demonstrate that you can do business, clean and competitive, in the legality, even in Corleone or San Giuseppe Jato; to demonstrate that you can do it without having to ask for protection to anyone except to the State, and according to the principles enshrined in the Constitution and the laws" (*our translation*). [Gianluca Faraone, President of the Cooperative Placido Rizzotto. In Barbieri (2003)].

4.3. The plurality of actors involved in the process of creation of social cooperatives

The results obtained in recent years with the Project Libera Terra are the outcome of significant collaboration between public institutions, private social organizations and civil society. Hereinafter we indicate the different actors involved in the process and their role, then illustrating the most significant changes occurred over the years.

Public Institutions

The Italian Parliament approved Law 109 in 1996, thus creating the opportunity of doing business on property confiscated from the mafia. In the following years, it was not undertaken a course of action consistent with this decision. Initially, a "Permanent Observatory on property confiscated" for data monitoring was established. In 1999, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers established the Office of the "Extraordinary Commissioner of the Government for the management and disposal of confiscated property from criminal organizations", with functions of coordination between administrative bodies and associations interested in the assignment of assets. It had a coordinating role among the administrations involved in the proceedings and associations interested in the allocation of goods. Despite the positive results of its action (Frigerio, 2009), the Office was unexpectedly suppressed by Berlusconi government in 2003. Its task were entrusted to the *Agenzia del Demanio* (State Property Agency), invested with new functions without adequate expertise in this area. This decision generated disconcertment and animated the debate within the associations engaged on this front, to the point that in 2007 he was appointed a new Extraordinary Commissioner. This office was intended to remove all bureaucratic obstacles, legal and economic for the use of goods, coordinating and accelerating administrative activities. As pointed out by the Commissioner Maruccia (2009), it often happens that many years elapse between the seizure and confiscation or occur problems of various kinds related to property (shortage of funds for renovations, abusive occupation, mortgages). It was estimated that normally it takes eight to ten years to see the property used (Frigerio, 2009). This is a negative signal to the public opinion that tarnishes the image of the State and nullifies the action of the Police and the Judiciary. For these reasons, the associative movement had long ago proposed the establishment of a National Agency for the management of assets, "in order to ensure rapidity and transparency in the assignment of the riches returned to the community" (Manifesto finale degli Stati Generali dell'Antimafia, 2006). Once again, the demands of civil society anticipate the action of the Institutions: the "National Agency for the administration and the destination of seized and confiscated assets" is established in 2010.

Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie

The Association Libera was born on March 25, 1995, under the guidance of Father Luigi Ciotti, with the aim of enhancing civil society in the fight against organized crime and promote legality and justice. It inaugurates its activities with an extraordinary initiative, collecting one million signatures for a bill which would allow the re-use for social purposes of confiscated property. Currently, *Libera* is coordinating more than 1.500 groups and associations, and it is present throughout Italy with a network of Presidia and local coordination, as well as with the "Botteghe dei sapori e dei saperi della legalità". Among its activities, there are educational projects in school, voluntary camps antimafia, project for labor and local development, anti-wear and anti-corruption activities, initiatives to raise awareness of citizenship (www.libera.it).

Libera has played a crucial role in the promotion and creation of social cooperatives. In 1995 it has mobilized public opinion in the entire country. In 2001 it supported and coordinated the creation of the social cooperative Placido Rizzotto and, in later years, that of the other cooperatives.

Under the direction of the association the process takes place in the legality because the selection procedures for the young people concerned are made through public notice. In it are specified the information about the confiscated property, project proposals are required and make explicit the professional profiles required.

The candidates must belong to specific categories (unemployed young people, disadvantaged people, etc.) and are chosen on the basis of their expertise by a special committee (composed of a component of Libera, one of the Consortium of municipalities and a delegate of the Prefecture).

In the phases of selection, training and start up of the cooperative there is an active collaboration with other actors within their respective competencies and responsibilities (depending on the case, municipalities, consortium of municipalities, agencies specializing in labor policies, association of cooperatives, etc.). Since 2001, the instrument has been refined, with attention also to the entrepreneurial propensity of candidates and giving priority to those who have an appropriate *forma mentis*. In the phases of selection, training and start-up of the social cooperative there is an active collaboration with other actors, according to different circumstances (municipalities, associations of municipalities, local associations and cooperative associations, etc.). "Responsibility" and "collaboration" were just the keywords indicated by *Libera* to overcome the many difficulties of the procedure for the re-use of confiscated property from the Mafia (Libera, 2012).

The Association urges the institution to undertake targeted action to make fully effective the instrument of confiscation and support the social cooperatives engaged in social re-use of assets (Manifesto degli Stati generali dell'antimafia, 2006,). It also offers to co-operatives and citizenship its moral and civil support in difficult moments. In this regard, we quote the words of Don Luigi Ciotti (2012):

"The recent incidents of vandalism against goods confiscated from the mafia, from Puglia to Sicily, from Lazio to Calabria do not leave us indifferent. Those goods are not only a slap to criminal organizations, a tool to weaken in what makes them strong: the illicit accumulation of capital. They are job opportunities, opportunities for a healthy economy and transparent and even before cultural change. [...] in the light of the succession of fires and vandalism is clear that something in the mechanism of protection should be revised. As well as, upstream, the instrument of confiscation should be strengthened, and in particular they must be unlocked those many goods still subject to mortgages banking, therefore unable to carry out their valuable function, social, educational, cultural and economic" (*our translation*).

The Prefectures and the Area Bodies

The Prefecture is territorial articulation of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Government. Under Law 131/2003 the Prefect of the regional capital is the state representative for relations with the system of local autonomies (www.interno.gov.it). The Prefecture has been the institutional organ responsible of the final destination of confiscated property before it was instituted the National Agency (ANBSC) in 2010.

The Project Libera Terra has originated in the Palermitan context where there were confiscation of agricultural land in some municipalities. They were fertile soils (the "better land") belonging to the clan of the *Corleonesi* who were there, waiting to be cultivated (about 150 ha). It was necessary to use these lands productively and for social purposes. "But Libera could not take them. It would not be right. The association does not manage terrains but is concerned to promote the social use. [...] We had to promote a path. And we did not have and could not do it alone" (Umberto Di Maggio, *our translation*). The Prefect of Palermo, Renato Profili, had a brilliant idea: the creation of a consortium

of municipalities to manage in a coordinated manner the goods confiscated, forming a real estate large enough to justify an entrepreneurial venture.

"At that time there were 5 municipalities involved. Among them there was the municipality of Monreale which had an infinite amount of confiscated property and the municipality of S. Giuseppe Jato, which instead had a microscopic amount. The City of St. Giuseppe Jato had had the *Brusca*. [...] The City of St. Giuseppe Jato is the most raped by mafia presence and can not fully enjoy alone of the establishment of the cooperative because it has only five acres. The Prefect had this brilliant idea: 'put together the assets of the two municipalities, the amount of confiscated property of Monreale enters at the disposal of those of S. Giuseppe Jato. You create a collective. Let's get together'. And put together the 5 municipalities. Then other municipalities soon joined. This is the strong pass. There had to be a strong support from the local authorities that they must have all the convenience to be together" (*our translation*). (Umberto Di Maggio, Regional Coordinator of Libera Sicilia and member of the Support Bodies in the Prefecture in Sicily).

And so the Consortium of Municipalities "Sviluppo e Legalità" (Development and Legality) was born on May 30 of 2000, bringing together eight municipalities of Palermo⁵ to administer in a partnership for social purposes the goods confiscated. The goal of the project "Sviluppo e Legalità" is to challenge concretely Organised Crime, helping to change the production structure of the land areas involved, turning unproductive land confiscated in a development opportunity. In particular, the specific objectives of the project are: a) recovering the confiscated assets from *Cosa Nostra*, consisting of agricultural land unused and in a state of abandonment for the lack of an effective and economic management during the seizure and confiscation; b) to create, through a public selection open to the unemployed youth of the area, social cooperatives in order to prevent and recover the conditions of discomfort and alienation, creating a healthy and legal entrepreneurship; c) to contribute to the sustainable development of the territory, creating new jobs and realizing an integrated system of biological productions of high quality; d) carry out activities aimed at disseminating the culture of legality in a territorial context difficult (www.sviluppolegalita.it).

Under the constant guidance of the Prefecture, and the coordination of *Libera*, the project is actually implemented over the years. An important contribution to its implementation also comes from the Ministry of Interior - Department of Public Safety. In October 2001, the initiative becomes a "pilot project" with reference to the PON "Security for the development of Southern Italy" 2000-2006 co-financed by the European Union, allocating substantial resources (over three million euro) for the territory of *Alto Belice Corleonese*. With the ERDF funds were realized: two farmhouses ("*Portella della Ginestra*" and "*Terre di Corleone*"), the Equestrian Center "*Giuseppe Di Matteo*", the wine cellar "*Centopassi*", a laboratory for the packaging of vegetables produced in the lands confiscated, and a "*Giardino della Memoria*" in S. Giuseppe Jato⁶.

Assets belonging to the bosses were so transformed into productive structures, entrusted to social cooperatives. About 100 people work in these structures and on 700 hectares of land of the Consortium, including members of Cooperatives and induced generated in the territory (www.sviluppolegalita.it). Today, after twelve years, the Consortium utilizes all the heritage confiscated from *Cosa Nostra* and the projects have become real, a sign of a tangible change for the local communities.

⁵ Altofonte, Camporeale, Corleone, Monreale, Piana degli Albanesi, Roccamena, San Cipirello and San Giuseppe Jato.

⁶ New funding granted to the Consortium by the PON "Security for Development Objective Convergence" 2007-2013 have also allowed the realization in Corleone, in a building confiscated from the family Provenzano, the *Bottega dei Sapori e dei Sapori della legalità* where you can buy the products Libera Terra.

The others partners of project "Sviluppo e Legalità"

Given the complexity of the initiative and its socio-economic relevance, the Prefect of Palermo involved - in addition to the Association Libera - also two publicly owned companies: *Italia Lavoro S.p.A.* and *Consorzio Sudgest*. The intent was to make use of specialist expertise in the development of the project. All partners have signed the "Charter of Commitments", committing to implement effectively what was promised during the planning of the initiative.

Italia Lavoro S.p.A. operates, by law, as instrumental entity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for the promotion and management of actions in the field of labor market policies, employment and social inclusion. To the company it is assigned the role of specific technical body to provide support to local authorities in the implementation of interventions in this area (www.italialavoro.it). Within the project "Sviluppo e Legalità" *Italia Lavoro S.p.A.* has implemented the actions of selection, training, mentoring, knowledge transfer and support to the professionalization of young people interested in the management of property entrusted by the Consortium (www.sviluppolegalità.it).

The Consortium *Sudgest* promotes and manages sustainable local development projects providing assistance to public administrations and civil society in the South of Italy and the world, especially in areas where more serious the elements of the crisis are and the greater the difficulties (www.sudgestaid.it). With the support of *Libera*, *Sudgest* has prepared the operational project for the recovery of land and structures confiscated site in the Municipalities of Alto Belice Corleonese, and the activation of agricultural production and agri-food biological. It also assisted the cooperative *Placido Rizzotto* during start-up (www.sudgestaid.it; www.sviluppolegalità.it).

The contribution of *Sudgest* to the project was limited to the creation of this first cooperative. Over time, also the partnership with *Italia Lavoro S.p.A.* was no longer necessary because the project *Libera Terra* has developed a kind of ability "endogenous". In 2006 it was born the *Agenzia Cooperare con Libera Terra* (Cooperating Agency with *Libera Terra*) within which the training of young co-operators takes place.

Funders and Donors

Among the various difficulties that young people of the cooperative *Placido Rizzotto* have faced initially there were financial ones. The start of the agricultural activity has only been possible thanks to donations from the cooperative world and funding provided by the ethical finance.

"Already during the stage period in Emilia Romagna it was evident that the resources were scarce, some of its founders did not even have the possibility to pay their share of the share capital, € 2.500, for some of them it was agreed that they would pay in installments or in the form of work" (our translation) [Gianluca Faraone, President of the *Cooperativa Placido Rizzotto*. In Barbieri, 2003]).

In the absence of real guarantees to offer⁷, the cooperative could not borrow from the banking system. It is the League of Cooperatives (*Legacoop*) to help members with a donation, which allows to start work in the fields putting in gear the tractor and commencing the first sowing (www.sviluppolegalità.it). Specifically, the main funds that enabled the cooperative *Placido Rizzotto* to be operational were:

- a donation of € 52.000 from *Coopfond*, through its fund for the development and promotion of cooperation, and a further loan of € 100.000. *Coopfond* is the company that manages the mutual fund for the promotion of cooperative of *Legacoop* (the oldest Italian cooperative organizations), powered by 3% of annual profits of all the member cooperatives (www.coopfond.it; www.legacoop.it);

⁷ Is recalled that goods are entrusted under concession to social cooperatives, they are not owned.

- entry into the capital of *Coop Adriatica* for an amount of € 50.000, as financing member. *Coop Adriatica* is one of the nine major cooperative of the cooperative system and the most important Italian distribution chain. By virtue of an established relationship with *Libera*, *Coop Adriatica* has included *Libera Terra* products in their stores since the early twenty-first century (www.e-coop.it/web/coop-adriatica);
- a loan of € 100.000 granted by *Banca Etica*, guaranteed by the Consortium *Sviluppo e Legalità*. *Banca Etica* is a cooperative bank that started its activities in 1999 according to the principles of ethical finance. With the savings collected organizations operating in four specific areas are funded: social cooperation, international cooperation, culture and environmental protection (www.bancaetica.it).

Legacoop supports the project “*Libera Terra*” since 2001. In addition to the assistance mentioned, it has made available support tools, such as guarantees and fidejussory policies for loans (for example, there has been a partnership *Coopfond*, *Unipol Banca*⁸ and *Banca Etica*). Furthermore, it has ensured the distribution of the products of cooperatives in its distribution network.

Civil society

An important actor that should not be forgotten is citizenship. Only thanks to the strong and widespread reaction of civil society to the mafia massacres of the early nineties it was possible to present the bill for the social reuse of confiscated property. On the other hand, the petition was also successful thanks to the engagement of the many active citizens who are actively dedicated to it. The Association *Libera* has become the bearer of the demands of justice and legality of civil society, giving voice to the need for redemption.

4.3.1. *The evolution of the network*

Over time there has been an evolution of the network of actors involved in the creation of social cooperatives. At the same time other actors have emerged that have offered, or may offer in the future, a useful contribution to the consolidation of these economic realities and the growth of new entrepreneurial initiatives in Italy.

A critical step in the development of the project was the establishment in 2006 of the Agency “*Cooperare con Libera Terra*” (Cooperating with *Libera Terra*), in order to support the creation and activities of the cooperatives operating on property confiscated from the mafia. It was founded on the initiative of some major cooperatives of Legacoop with a twofold mission: a) consolidate and support the business development of the cooperatives through the transfer of know-how, as far as possible free of charge; b) to create initiatives for mutual knowledge among members, cooperatives and local communities, encouraging a crossing of paths between different realities in order to strengthen the cooperative spirit.

The Agency (which has today more than 70 members) replaced *Italia Lavoro S.p.A.* in coordinating the training of young people selected. In particular, the services offered are: a) preparation of feasibility studies for new business initiatives and the creation of networks, b) identification of the professional profiles required, managing the selection and training with *Libera*, c) support the start up of cooperatives, with the development the business plan and budget, d) support the implementation of strategic decisions coordinates, e) coordination of audit control for compliance with the requirements of the brand *Libera Terra* (www.cooperareconliberaterra.it).

With regard to financial support to cooperatives, the *Fondazione con il Sud* (Foundation with the South) has funded small interventions of restructuring (roof, road, and so on), consistent with its institutional mission. It is a private non-profit organization, founded in 2006 by the alliance between

⁸ Unipol Banca offers specific services reserved for Cooperative belonging to Legacoop (called “Value cooperative”). <http://unipolbanca.it>

banking foundations and the world of the third sector and the voluntary sector, to foster social cohesion pathways for the development of Southern Italy (<http://www.fondazioneconilsud.it>).

The sharing of social and economic problematic has also given rise to a fruitful collaboration with the *Association Addiopizzo* of Palermo, an organization founded in 2004 by a group of young volunteers and successfully engaged in the fight against the Mafia. Its field of action is the specific promotion of a virtuous economy, free from the Mafia, through the instrument of "critical consumption" (www.addiopizzo.org). The Association, in addition to creating a positive cultural climate in the territory (vaccaro, 2012), actively supports the activities of social co-operatives indicating suppliers (of goods and/or services) present in the *Addiopizzo list* from which to obtain supplies. This contains firms from any part of Sicily which have signed a document to join the association in which they state not to pay the *pizzo* (slang term for extortion), formally committing themselves not to pay it in the future. Therefore, by virtue of this collaboration, even some companies that demonstrate concretely their behavior anti-mafia become part of the network of the Project Libera Terra.

The category associations support more and more cooperatives Libera Terra in their path, promoting visibility at national and sectoral level since their establishment. For example, the cooperative Beppe Montana participated in 2012 at the "Welcome Day" organized by Legacoop in favor of new social enterprises members of the organization. A meeting with the heads of national offices of Legacoop and industry associations, as well as with the largest companies of the cooperative world (www.legacoopsicilia.coop). At the territorial level, in addition, Legacoop Sicily always shows its solidarity with the cooperatives, on the occasion of fires and acts of vandalism, promoting public initiatives which encourage the reaction of civil society. This is clear from the statement of its President, released in June 2012, following the fire of some land in the province of Catania managed by the cooperative Beppe Montana:

"It's not the first time that the Mafia tries to intimidate those who work on land confiscated. [...] The episode is worrying but it will not make a step back cooperators who work there daily and can fully rely on the support of Legacoop. In the coming days we will organize a public event in Belpasso for making feel so honest voice of Sicily" (*our translation*) (Elio Sanfilippo, Regional President Legacoop Sicily. <http://legacoopsicilia.coop>)

It should be mentioned another actor who was recently added to the network and that, in the future, may offer a synergistic contribution in the process of re-use of confiscated property, given its institutional mission and its ability to raise awareness: the University. In recent years the issue of confiscated property has been the subject of study in its different profiles. As can be seen from Table 2, the University of Palermo in Italy was the first to organize a special course in "high education in administration and disposal of confiscated property". In the wake of this course the University of Naples has organized, in collaboration with various stakeholders (including the Association Libera), the first Master on the phenomena of organized crime and strategies for social re-use of confiscated property. Finally, it reported the summer school "Youth, Entrepreneurship and Innovation", organized by the Association Libera and the University of Palermo in September 2012. This school aims to educate young people to entrepreneurship, promoting creative and innovative forms, in the awareness that a valid territorial development program is generated by their involvement mobilizing intelligence, passion and desire for change (Di Maggio, La Commare, 2012). The initiative aims to exert a driving force among young people, opening up future prospects able to prevent or eliminate the growing social unrest. At the same time, it aims to increase the entrepreneurial dynamism of the territory freeing up the potentialities related to culture, environment and traditions, starting from those in the assets confiscated. In 2013, the summer school will be replicated in Campania and Calabria.

Finally, in 2010 it was established the National Agency for the administration and the destination of the goods seized and confiscated from organized crime (ANBSC), (Decree Law 4 February 2010, n. 4). The Agency is responsible for the process of managing assets during the judicial and administrative phases. In the judicial phase (from seizure to final confiscation) The Agency is an organ of advice that supports the Judicial Authority in the resolution of problems found by the judge

and court administrator in the course of the proceedings. In the administrative phase (which begins with the confiscation final), the Agency is responsible for the operational management of the property, providing for their destination within 90 days of the final confiscation (redoubled in complex tasks). In both phases, the Agency is in charge of the monitoring of assets through the acquisition of documents and data, verifying the state, the consistency and the possible destination. In the light of the acquired data, it plans the assignment, taking initiatives and measures to ensure the timeliness of the procedure. To date, the Agency is not yet fully operational, causing controversy among experts. To carry out effectively the tasks assigned are needed institutional interventions. In the last annual report of its activities it is denounced "the absolute inadequacy of the resources allocated in respect of the many tasks" (ANBSC, 2011), not only financial resources but also human (just 30 units of staff, for at least 100 necessary). Despite this, the Agency's Director Giuseppe Caruso points out that five locations have been established in Italy (Reggio Calabria, Rome, Milan, Naples and Palermo) and removed several problems to allocate the largest number of goods to the Territorial Authorities. In addition, he states that staff expansion should be accompanied "by the transformation of the National Agency in public economic entity, which would allow for recruiting qualified staff dedicated exclusively to operating activities" (interview in Modica, 2013).

Table 2. Training initiatives on the subject of property confiscated from organized crime

	Course in high education in administration and disposal of confiscated property	Second level Master in "Analysis of the phenomena of organized crime and strategies for social re-use of confiscated property"	Summer school "GIÀ - Youth, Entrepreneurship and Innovation"
Sponsoring bodies	Department of European Studies and International Relations (DEMS) of the University of Palermo, National anti-Mafia Procuratorate, National Agency for the administration and the destination of the goods seized and confiscated from organized crime, Professional Associations of Accountants and Lawyers of Palermo.	University of Naples "Federico II" <i>Parties adherent:</i> Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie, Avviso Pubblico, Legambiente, Federation of Italian Anti-wear and Anti-racket Associations, Committee Don Peppe Diana; National Institute judicial administrators.	Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie. University of Palermo. <i>Parties adherent:</i> Prefecture of Agrigento, Agency for the administration and the destination of the goods seized and confiscated from organized crime, Agrigentino Consortium for the legality and development, Diocese of Agrigento, Policoro Project, Chamber of Commerce of Agrigento, Consortium Arca, Department of European Studies and International Relations (DEMS) of the University of Palermo, Agency Cooperare con Libera Terra
Objective	Provide preparation updated on the system of rules governing the matter. Provide managerial skills for the administration of the goods.	Provide knowledge, methodological tools and operational resources useful: to the critical understanding of the phenomena of mafia crime, illicit activities and their impact on the economic and social fabric; to the identification of more effective intervention strategies to promote social paths antimafia, particularly with regard the tools offered by the legislation in the field of social re-use of assets confiscated from organized crime.	Spreading entrepreneurship among the youth by creating the conditions for the networking of ideas and innovation projects for the territory, in the perspective of giving birth to the «entrepreneurial community» that enhance the development opportunities stemming also from the social re-use of confiscated property.
Editions	I Edition (2010) II Edition (2011) III Edition (2012)	I Edition (2012/2013)	I Edition (2012)

Source: our elaboration based on documents and institutional websites of the University of Palermo, University of Naples "Federico II" and "Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie"

5. DISCUSSION

Entrepreneurial experiences here presented show that the social re-use of confiscated property has been carried out through the participation of several actors and the creation of a network of relationships to promote a model of social economy founded on legality. The analysis carried out shows that the cooperation between the actors involved has been the determining factor that allowed the cooperative Placido Rizzotto to emerge, which then became a successful business model for the affirmation of other enterprises. In particular, the path taken was possible thanks to the extraordinary commitment and cooperation between the institutions and associations Antimafia, first and foremost, the Consortium "Sviluppo e Legalità", the Prefect of Palermo and Association Libera.

Then these have been followed by a plurality of actors, broadening and diversifying the network of relationships underlying the entrepreneurial process presented. Even cooperative movements of different nature brought together around the purpose to use the resources available for the common good. The data and information provided indicate that the activities on property confiscated generate positive effects in terms of employment, economic, social and cultural development. As a result, the consolidation and expansion of the network of actors is highly desirable, especially considering that the territories mainly interested are the most frustrated by the presence of the Mafia. More generally, these initiatives are worthy of interest for the strong symbolic value and impulse to the legality generated in the country. The development of this sector has, however, limits deriving from:

- the assignment times of confiscated
- the lack of financial resources
- the difficulties of access to credit.

As regards the first aspect, the complexity of administrative procedures and issues relating to goods increase the period of time that elapses between the phases of seizure, confiscation and destination. In fact, there are often "structural problems" related to the nature of the goods subject to confiscation: mortgage banking and legal matters that preclude immediate use, illegal occupation of relatives or persons close to the mafia, state of total abandonment (Di Maggio, 2012). Real estate management can therefore be a problem, especially if it is underperforming or there is not the right commitment by the administrators, even risking a loss of value of the property.

A decisive step forward to make the system more effective and functional has been made with the establishment of the National Agency for the goods seized and confiscated from organized crime. Thanks to it, it will be possible to streamline administrative procedures and accelerate time to allocation of goods. However, the Agency is not yet fully operational and further institutional interventions are necessary for the fulfillment of its objectives. Financial and human resources are essential for the strengthening of the Agency and its activities. Therefore, we need greater political sensibility of the institutions and the adoption of appropriate governance policies. In this light, it may be useful to have a constructive dialogue with the associations involved in order to cooperate in the identification of appropriate solutions. In this regard, twelve social organizations and antimafia have recently proposed to the Minister of the Interior Cancellieri the establishment at the "ANBSC" an advisory body composed of their representatives. The intent is to facilitate the work, identifying critical issues and action plans, as well as to promote concertation among the Agency, Local Authorities and national and local associations involved (Ma.De., 2012). A participatory approach is proposed also given the too restrictive timing and the risk that the not assigned goods are sold. This possibility is severely criticized by all those who are actively engaged on this front (Di Maggio, 2011) because it opens the way for the re-appropriation of goods by the mafia or near people. Moreover, it undermines the symbolic value of the law 109/96, it devalues the social aims and annuls the civil commitment that constitutes the story. Also educational institutions can make a useful contribution in the desired direction, forming adequately the professional figures involved in the process of re-use of goods and helping to mature a higher degree of sensitivity. The educational initiatives promoted by the University of Palermo and Naples, and the Association Libera are recent, but they are a clear

signal of an academic interest in the phenomenon and a will to provide knowledge and useful tools. The concrete results of these educational initiatives will be appreciated in the future.

To the complexity of administrative procedures it is added the lack of financial resources to ensure a timely and effective use of the assets. The municipalities often do not have the necessary funds to implement the restructuring interventions of the goods to make them fit for use or usable, or do not express their interest for the assignment of the property to the competent authority⁹. Currently, the resources used to finance the creation of cooperatives come mainly from the mutuality funds of the associations of cooperative, from national and European structural funds (Security PON measures), by Banca Etica, by private foundations, by local associations, and financing members. Often resources are not sufficient and the feasibility of the projects is therefore entrusted to the solidarity of citizens and local authorities. It would be appropriate a structural approach, with the creation of a permanent national fund in which to transfer money and securities seized from the mafia, as well as revenue from the management of assets not yet allocated (Frigerio, 2009).

Another related issue is represented by the difficulties of access to credit given the legal status of the property. The assets are entrusted under concession and can not therefore be the subject of guarantees. With reference to social cooperatives, they receive free goods on loan for use, but can not rely on them to get funding. Within the Project Libera Terra, this difficulty has been overcome with the activation of a network of actors mobilized by Legacoop which favored the granting of loans. However, for the future, institutional interventions that promote this form of entrepreneurship would be desirable. Among the proposals, there is that of the Regional President of Legacoop Sicily, Elio Sanfilippo, to approve a law providing "guarantees issued by the Region in support of cooperatives that require financing to credit institutions for projects relating to the activities of property management" (*our translation*). On the other hand, the amount of property confiscated from the mafia organizations and the business volume that flows from it would justify greater attention by the legislative bodies. The goods are a tangible economic value - about 20 billion Euros the total estimated value - which, if properly used, can contribute to economic growth and social development of entire communities. Another possible way could be the access to the financial resources of international organizations engaged in the promotion of social entrepreneurship, such as the famous Ashoka (<http://www.ashoka.org>). Moreover, the pattern of social and public use of property confiscated from criminals that Italy is experiencing has aroused a great interest abroad, particularly in the European Union as evidenced by the efforts to promote a Directive on the use of confiscated property (Maruccia, 2009). Of course, it remains the hope that one day even the traditional channels of the banking system are viable, in addition to the current contribution of some of its foundations. Furthermore, there should be a general awareness of the problem of bank mortgages on the assets of the mafia, demonstrating the necessary sensitivity during the administrative procedure with concrete actions¹⁰.

By virtue of the synergistic collaboration among the different actors of the project Libera Terra it has been possible to overcome the many difficulties and problems inherent in the social re-use of confiscated from the mafia in the Southern regions of Italy. The collaboration between institutions, associations and civil society is born out of a spirit of sharing of economic and social problems of the area. From time to time, the most appropriate ways of working have been activated for the affirmation of the ultimate goal: the productive use of the property for the benefit of the community. In this sense, the actors who participated in the constitution of cooperatives Libera Terra, under the direction of the Association, have sometimes been different depending on the specificities of the situation and the characteristics of the areas concerned. Without a doubt, an element of strength and innovation that has characterized the management and re-use of confiscated was the establishment

⁹ The law 109/1996 had predicted a prefectural fund to finance projects for the reuse of assets (powered by resources obtained from the sale of movable property, furniture and registered company). However, this fund was predicted with a term of three years and, to date, no longer exists.

¹⁰ The assignment of the Feud *Verbumcaudo* to the Sicilian Region in 2012, after 24 years from seizure was made possible thanks to the strong gesture of Unicredit, which annulled the millionaire mortgage registered on the property. To date, it remains an isolated case.

of the «consortium of municipalities». By using it, cooperatives were put in a position to do better social enterprise by virtue of a greater share of land not confined within the boundaries of a single municipality (Frigerio, Pati, 2007).

The success and experience have made the cooperative Placido Rizzotto a model for the emergence of other businesses. In this regard, it should be noted that "the experience gained over the years has been put to good refining some of the mechanisms that originally had created some difficulties in the establishment and start-up of its business" (Valentina Fiore, founding member of Cooperative Placido Rizzotto). In particular, it was decided to develop professional profiles more accurate and responsive to needs of the nascent cooperatives (the last three), specifying them in the notice of public selection. The selection was carried out in two steps in order to choose the cooperators among a larger number of individuals initially admitted to the course of training, with the aim of creating a core group of young motivated and aware of the entrepreneurial path proposed and its peculiar mode. This choice was motivated by the intention to avoid or reduce departures, partly physiological, of some members due to disagreements about the "way" of doing business once established the cooperative. In this sense, the potential conflict among the members and their entrepreneurial vision, with the dynamics that follow, represent a unique element of complexity of the start-up phase of these production enterprises. After all, this is related to the mechanism of formation of the cooperative, which originates from the legislative and environmental opportunity rather than by the desire of a group of people who know each to pursue a business project shared.

Finally, another mechanism that has been refined and has benefited from the contribution of a new key actor, the *Agenzia Cooperare con Libera Terra*, is the analysis of enterprise. Over the years, it was deemed necessary to develop business plans most specific to the establishment of cooperatives, or rather, feasibility studies developed in relation to the amount of land to be managed. Such studies are, then, the basis on which the members of the cooperative independently develop the plan and strategy shared.

Today seven social cooperatives offer the opportunity for young and disadvantaged people to do business in their territories, preventing or eliminating states of unemployment and social distress aggravated by the strong presence of the Mafia. Damage and intimidation have not stopped but these difficult moments are overcome thanks to the network of alliances, partnerships and solidarity that in recent years the antimafia association has managed to build around them.

The results obtained are important from the symbolic viewpoint and for the local economy. They do not change the sign of the *mafiosa* economy, but they are experiences that "are changing the heads of citizens" because they demonstrate concretely that it is possible to take away the riches of the Mafia and return them to the community (Gianluca Faraone, President of the Cooperative Placido Rizzotto. In www.liberaradio.it). The Project Libera Terra is getting progressively social legitimacy in the territory. The agricultural laborers, who initially refused to work the land seized, today make the "queuing up" to get a contract of fixed-term employment at Cooperativa Placido Rizzotto. This happened because the project of Libera has become a «process of people» (DiMaggio, 2013), providing concrete opportunities to the community, to the less "sensitive" people to the ideals of legality and social justice at the origin of the project. The laborers recognize that their work is rightly paid and is legally protected compared to other realities. This is what matters to people in need. The agreements with organic farmers and local artisan structures are another example of how the work done by cooperatives Libera Terra is now accepted and favored by recognizing his contribution to the socio-economic development of the territory.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The goods confiscated from the Mafia are a concrete resource for economic development, social and civil life of an area. Thanks to the opportunity presented by the Italian legislation has been possible to use them to realize forms of social entrepreneurship that create social value, generating benefits for disadvantaged people and the local communities affected. This entrepreneurial phenomenon can spread to other regions of Italy. In any case, such a path will lead to positive results in the future to the extent that solidarity actions will be accompanied by a political sensitivity heralding of appropriate institutional policies.

The reuse of assets generates a social entrepreneurship guided by ethics and legality. It is characterized by its strong symbolic value and not simply economic, having the potential to catalyze social and civil change in the territories oppressed by the presence of the Mafia. Libera Terra cooperatives operating in Sicily, Calabria, Puglia and Campania, using productively the assets which previously belonged to the Mafia bosses, are the more authentic witness of a possible change.

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