

COMMUNICATION SETTINGS FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES: international comparison between networks of solidarity economy in Brazil and Italy

PARÂMETROS DE COMUNICAÇÃO PARA O EMPODERAMENTO DE COMUNIDADES: comparação internacional entre redes de economia solidária no Brasil e na Itália

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a qualitative comparison between two communities in Brazil and Italy, which host a solidarity organization. These communities promote sustainable and local development, empowering their residents, building an alternative way of producing, in a form of plural economy. Financial sustainability comes from public and private aid, and this can affect the durability of communities by making them dependent on funds. This condition weakens the possibility of local development. To develop this research we used the qualitative approach, and data were collected through structured and unstructured interviews, in addition to the participatory observation. The results demonstrate that the method of communication between solidarity economy networks and investors is relevant, because sometimes those who offer funds can contribute to building development conditions that are not truly empowering for the community. It is concluded that an adequate method of communicating the information necessary for community development can contribute to local empowerment, including possible problems of financial sustainability.

Keywords: Empowerment. Solidarity economy. Development. Sustainability. Networks. Plural economy.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma comparação qualitativa entre duas comunidades no Brasil e na Itália, que hospedam uma organização de solidariedade. Essas comunidades promovem o desenvolvimento sustentável e local, empoderando seus moradores, construindo uma forma alternativa de produzir, em uma forma de economia plural. A sustentabilidade financeira é proveniente de ajuda pública e privada, e isso pode afetar a durabilidade das comunidades, tornando-as dependentes de fundos. Esta condição enfraquece a possibilidade de ser criado um desenvolvimento local. Para desenvolver esta pesquisa, utilizamos a abordagem qualitativa, e os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas estruturadas e não estruturadas, além da observação participante. Os resultados demonstram que o método de comunicação entre redes de economia solidária e investidores é relevante, pois, às vezes, quem oferece fundos pode contribuir em construir condições de desenvolvimento que não são uma verdadeira capacitação para a comunidade. Conclui-se que um adequado método de comunicação da informação, necessária para o desenvolvimento das comunidades, pode contribuir para o empoderamento local, apresentando, inclusive, possíveis problemas da sustentabilidade financeira.

Palavras-chave: Empoderamento. Economia solidária. Desenvolvimento. Sustentabilidade. Redes. Economia plural.

1 INTRODUCTION

Making a local society (MAGNAGHI, 2003) for “solidarity economy” actually means that development is built through a democratic mechanism (SINGER, 2002) involving a territory wholly (MANCE, 2010). Local development is strongly linked with sustainability, not only in an economic frame, but also in a social and environmental one. Economic dimension relates with production of goods and financial sustainability of experiences in relation to external actors. Social dimension is connected with empowerment, with distribution of power decision in the community, and promotion of social inclusion. So on solidarity economy doesn't mean an individualistic growth, but the capacity of being into a network, to fight against dependence on financial funds.

The article will compare, two communities in weak areas that include two experiences of solidarity economy, facing a lack of development. In Brazilian case there is an incubator promoted by a public institution. In the Italian case there is a social cooperative. They are both engaged in a mechanisms of local empowerment in a frame of solidarity economy¹. Both of experiences build social capital, empowering the community. “Social capital has the source of common good: people who try to reinforce structures of reciprocity through networks, produce benefits not only for themselves, but for everyone who is in these structures”. (MUTTI, 1998, p. 13).

The first case study concerns the experience of the community named *Matarandiba*, that started a project of solidarity economy thanks to the help of the “Technical Incubator of solidarity economy” (ITES-UFBA), a public institute connected to the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).

The second case study concerns the experience of the community named *Scarcelli*, in which there is a social cooperative² “Il Segno”. It tries to work towards

¹ A frame of solidarity economy includes social justice, social inclusion, democratic participation, local production, sustainability, promotion of social bonds.

² A cooperative is an autonomous association of people that voluntary join themselves to satisfy their common economic, social and cultural needs, through an enterprise that has a common property and it is democratically managed (Cimini et Al. 2004). Law 381/1991 “Regulation of social cooperative” regulated the normative on this issue. It established that a social cooperative could be of two types “A” or “B”: - Cooperative “A” manage health and social services and educational; - Cooperative “B” include in economic activities disadvantaged people. They can carry out any activity but the 30% of workers have to be disadvantaged. Members of a social cooperative could be of different kind: volunteers, sponsors, users, workers, disadvantaged people.

labor inclusion of youth and people who have been fired out. It tries to be a promoter of projects for youth living in *Fuscaldo*, stimulating human resources and creating networks among different local associations.

The comparison considers how solidarity values and networks created by these experiences could positively impact on social inclusion of both communities. Focus is on the dependence on funds that could affect the success of their development project. Methodology used is qualitative one. Tools are structured and unstructured interviews. In the first case structured interviews were made to the director of the incubator and to others students or people involved in the incubator, that work directly in community. In the second case structured interviews were made to the three woman members of the cooperative and to others volunteers. Mainly questions were divided into three part. The first was about history of organization, the second about projects developed in community, and the third about personal consideration about the social impact. In both cases unstructured interviews were made to some people of the community involved in project activities. We made 8 structured interviews and 10 unstructured. We analysed also some reports on activities in both experiences. The research benefits also by observing participation. The research lasted from April to August 2012 in Brasil and in December 2013 in Calabria.

This work has three main part and a brief conclusion. In the first part there is a reflection on some key words such as “solidarity economy” and “sustainable development”; in the second part we will describe the two case study; the third part explains how experiences deal with sustainability, through a comparison between two case study.

2 SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: a different conception of development

Solidarity economy states his values pointing on differences between growth and development. An economic action needs to have a social impact and it has to build local development too (SARRIA ICAZA, 2006).

McMichael assumes that development has been built as a project in response to decolonization with two main ingredients, the national State and the economic growth. However, in Nineties, when the failure of this project was clear, it began to

have a movement that contrasted it, based on strategy of processing alternative ways of living life.

Development project has been put increasingly under scrutiny in Nineties, considerably it has lost credibility among the member States of the Third World. Its success was very uncertain and there was a growing reaction to its will of homogenizing everything to an only right way of developing. In some parts of the world ethnic or cultural movements of advocacy have begun to reassert their political demands. There is also a growing movement that tends to develop alternative ways of living going beyond formal economic relations. (MCMICHAEL, 2006, p. 54).

Meadows report in 1972 put into question the belief that development is limitless, linear and constant, characteristics that classic economics have put as bases of their actions. Meadows is a study made by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to investigate the long-term consequence of growth concerning five variables: population, industrial capital, food production, consumption of environmental resources, pollution. Conclusions pointed out the need for a modification to the idea of growth, in favor of “an idea of economic and ecological stability”. (MEADOWS CIT. IN LA CAMERA, 2005). This idea included, for the first time, a reflection on limits of growth identified on the availability of resources. This position contrasted the idea of the market limitless, in which everything is a result of production and therefore of exploitation of something in order to appreciate the capital.

We must carefully distinguish between growth and development. The economic growth, which is a growth in quantity, cannot be limitless in a finite planet like the Earth. Economic development, which is an improvement of the quality of life, not necessarily causes an increase in the amount of resources consumed; it can be sustainable. (MEADOWS CIT. IN LA CAMERA, 2005, p. 12).

In order to processing an alternative and sustainable way of life, in Nineties a concrete action has been materializing in movements of solidarity economy. For twenty years solidarity economy has tried to safeguard social spaces from the invasion of the capitalistic market system intended as the only way of producing wealth. The binomial “Solidarity Economy” appeared in South America, in particular in Brazil into movements of popular economy, and it includes practices put in place in response to inequality and privatization, identified as consequences of the crisis of the traditional economy, intended as capitalist and financial market (SINGER, 2002).

This phenomenon developed in various ways. In Brazil was born the SENAES (department of solidarity economy) in the department of labour, that institutionalised some practices, putting them into political programs. On the other hand social movements, joint for the first time in Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001 (until now they have met every year), work towards a post-capitalistic solution, thinking about the solidarity economy as a form of resistance. Although these practices are different, they have as a common goal to limit the dangerous effects of financial and monetary economies, and to work on real economy. They want to build a space of democratic participation seeking the absence of public authorities, promoting social justice, and integrating economy to society through solidarity bonds.

Literature about solidarity economy is divided into different prospective, in a teleological sense, into substitutive and complementary approaches (CAILLE, 2009); on the one hand there are a number of alternative economic practices that have as purpose the overthrow of capitalistic way of production and the system of private relationships which it supports and stimulates; they are defined as practices of solidarity economy (MANCINI, 2003; RAZETO, 2003). Other practices seek to restructure the current economy through a variety of economic forms, taking up the theoretical model of social and policy regulation, among State, market and community, stated by Polanyi (2000), and defined as pluralistic practices (LAVILLE, 1998; CAILLE, 1998), and also as social economy. Nevertheless social and solidarity economy proposes a development approach structured on local production and networks (BIOLGHINI, 2007; MANCINI, 2010; RAZETO, 2003), on democratic participation and social justice (SINGER, 2002), on ecological ideas (SAROLDI, 2003) and on relationship with institution into a public space (LAVILLE, 1998). To sum up practices of socio-solidarity economy aim to a sustainability not only from an economic point of view, but also from an environmental and social one.

Magnaghi (2003) assumes that sustainable development, since environment and humans are closely related, is given by the virtuous relationship between the natural and the anthropic environment. Community is an actor of sustainable development only when its actions meet the needs of the territory, "making a local society". Social and solidarity experiences aim to build a local society, fighting the strategy of homogeneity and profit limitless wanted by the capitalistic market economy. This goal doesn't involve any differences between the solidarity and the

social prospective. It means that an experience of social and solidarity economy cannot work without thinking the possible development of that area together with the stakeholders involved that are aware of their needs. Solidarity economy is strongly linked with local environment and networks and it takes care about regulation among State, market and community, balance re-establishing.

3 TWO DIFFERENT PROJECTS OF SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

The community of *Matarandiba*, located in the island of *Itaparica*, in the municipality of *Vera Cruz*, Salvador de Bahia, which has 40 thousand inhabitants. *Matarandiba* is a fishing community with about 200 families; most of them have a very low income and a big difficulty in entering the labor market. The project has been running since 2006, and has received several financing, both public and private.

In *Matarandiba* there are currently five projects funded by different agencies, even with the involvement of multinational Dow Chemical, which has an installation of rock salt in the municipality of *Matarandiba*, from which it extracts mineral salt which then it works industrially. It is present from the beginning of the project, in fact in 2006 the community, together with the prefecture and Dow, asked the intervention of the incubator of solidarity economy ITES-UFBA. They started a process of incubation with the intention of developing a local network of solidarity economy in order to ensure a better quality of life. The role of the incubator is really important as engine of the territory.

The incubator³ of solidarity economy (ITES-Ufba) of the Federal University of Bahia has been active in the area for ten years and has built up a strong expertise, important for each incubators, especially for those in the Northeast of Brazil. Today the reality of the incubators is widespread in Brazil. Since the beginning all incubators

³ Incubators are authorities, that belong to both public and private universities. Their aim is to support solidarity and economic activities in weak economic areas, with people excluded from labor market. Incubators offer technical assistance to area that want to implement projects of solidarity economy. Their style is to establish democratic participation in taking decisions, in which everybody is equal. In this way, workers become aware of their strength and possibilities (FREIRE, 2011) and together they can seek answers to common problems, following the principles of self-government and democracy.

started to build themselves in networks. The network of Incubators of popular cooperatives (ITCPs)⁴ was born in 1994, network Unitrabalho⁵ was founded in 1996.

Incubators are within universities and for this reason they work to train teachers and students on the themes of solidarity economy and community planning. Projects include productive activities that do not take in consideration only the economic aspect, but that try to preserve the social, cultural and environmental aspects too. Activities of the incubator are a result of community decisions, gathered in the "Community Committee", with the technical collaboration of the incubator. It tries to create a democratic system of "community board", which takes decisions on development projects. In this way community becomes conscious of itself and it tries to organize itself from the point of an economic, social, environmental and cultural durability. In addition to technical support, incubators address the community towards the forms of alternative finance, intercepting both public policy programs and private funding.

Building a network of solidarity economy needs time and a good relationship with the community. This is a situation hard to realize, because it needs a long social work into the community, to build the network and the consciousness about solidarity.

In Matarandiba it was created the program "Ecosmar", through which the bank financed the birth of community bank⁶, which financed the birth of a small supermarket, a restaurant and transportation management. It uses local and social currency and this mechanism, as a lot of studies prove, speeds up the local economy.

Calabria, from a statistical point of view has a notable development delay and lack of social services available for people. Scarcelli is one of four communities based in the municipality of Fuscaldo, in the North coast of Calabria. Fuscaldo has a surface of about 60 Km, with a population of 8279 inhabitants. Like the regional territory

⁴ The National Programme of incubators of popular cooperatives (PRONINC) was born thanks to the help of FINEP (Studies and Projects Finance authority), the Bank of Brazil, the foundation of the Bank of Brazil and the COEP (Committee of Public Entities in the Fight Against Hunger and for Life), with the aim of fomenting the creation of activities in solidarity economy by offering technical assistance, study areas, research and development of social technologies. The ITCPs integrates today 50 incubators

⁵ The "Unitrabalho" is a national university network of incubators that aggregates 92 universities along with schools.

⁶ The Community bank is an institution that provides microcredit loans in social currency to solidarity groups or persons. "Banks are Community networks of solidarity financial services, in form of association, which aim to reorganize local economy in terms of income and employment generation, based on the principles of solidarity economy" (MELO NETO; MAGALHÃES, 2007, p. 7).

where it is based, it is not well organized to welcome tourists, social services are weakly organized and inhabitants have a low revenue. Nevertheless the majority of them can cultivate and transform products on their own to provide for family sustenance.

Social cooperative "*Il Segno*" is a cooperative "B", founded in 2007 to face together the problem of lack of work in the little community of Scarcelli. *Il Segno* started its activity as a social cooperative producing textile products, because one of the members was a seamstress that made available her ability and knowledge to the cooperative. Then they bought a place where sell their products joint with "Fair Trade" products.

In 2009 cooperative decided to ask the municipality a land to start an agriculture activity, because one of the woman is formed as a land surveyor and decided to integrated the main activity of the cooperative to make it economically sustainable. The municipality of Paola, nearby Fuscaldo, gave them a land that had not been in production for 30 years. Today agriculture is the main activity of the social cooperative *Il Segno*. The first step for the cooperative was to put into production the land, clearing of mines and reclaiming. It started in 2010 selling fresh and transformed products, grown up as biological production.

Because of *Il Segno* is a social cooperative type "B", one of its aims it is also social inclusion of disadvantaged people. Until now in the cooperative there are two disadvantaged people with an open ended contract, then there is one with fixed term contract. During the summer the cooperative hosts group of youth that exchange their work in the cooperative, with a period of education and holiday. Majority of them comes from the North of Italy, experimenting an useful cooperation and exchange of knowledge. There are about forty volunteers that help during the years, especially during the summer.

While the incubator in Matarandiba is an experience of solidarity economy that is institutionalized, because it refers to the secretary of solidarity economy (SENAES) in the national department of labour in Brazil, the social cooperative tries to promote development creating networks and collaborating with other economic experiences and local institutions. These are two different projects, that show two perspectives of making local development, with different results and involvement of community. In these experiences it is important how it is managed the

communication among the single organization with the others, and with the public institutions, in a prospective of a collective construction of local development. Communication settings could have a big impact on development.

4 DEVELOPMENT IN SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

4.1 SOCIAL DIMENSION

The social dimension of development is connected with the creation of social bonds in community (MANCE, 2010). Strong social bonds contribute to strengthen social cohesion and especially in poor communities it offers a possibility of development. A territory that is well developed it has a strong social texture, with an high revenue and high level of schooling. Social cohesion means community empowerment, with a deep reflection on gender and citizenship issues. A strong social dimension enables the possibility for citizenship to participate in public sphere, and to reach a good level of discussion about public questions. Inhabitant can influence public policies and influence decisions. When citizens can discuss their problem at a political level, they have consciousness about gender and citizenship problems, and they can face lack of work, it means that they are included in community. This social inclusion is an important value for solidarity economy. Network is an important tool to make a stronger social cohesion and inclusion, and it helps the exchange of knowledge and resources. These links into networks are based on reciprocity between people and organizations, but this process needs to be always driven by an actor.

4.1.1 Strength and limits into the process of building cohesion

The important feature of the ITES-Ufba incubator is that it uses a methodology that work with inhabitants. Methodology assumes that it is important to establish a relationship of action research and extension⁷, in an equal relationship between

⁷ According to the forum of extension of the federal public university extension is "a process of education, culture and science that articulates teaching and research as related things, and realizes a transforming relationship between the university and society." The extension is the ongoing relationship between

incubator and territory, instead of a top down approach. Its methodology has four objectives: education, research, network planning and implementation of the project.

First axis about education could also be called “continuing education course”, because even if it is the first thing done it never ends; the improvement in fact is done as a long process of capacity building of inhabitants and specifically that ones who will work in local initiatives such as community bank, cultural associations and economic activities. This process is oriented to ITES technicians too, because they can educate themselves understanding a specific community. Very often the communities are poor, with an high school-dropout rate or illiteracy, so thus for this reason education is the first step of the methodology. In this sense education has as a task the role of making people consciousness of their capabilities (Freire,2011). It is composed by a series of courses involving community and ITES technicians, made by professors working at ITES. This is for ITES the first contact with reality, in order to begin to assess features and identify inhabitants who can work more closely to the project, supporting ITES technicians in the process of incubation.

The second axis of the methodology is the research. While the training is completely managed by professors, this second phase involves inhabitants. It is divided into two parts:

- a) a map on socio-economic situation, on local production, that lasts about six months. In *Matarandiba* were involved twelve youth of the community.
- b) a cultural map. There were interviewed ten old women of the community, the oral custodian of the history of the community.

During the third step they set up a project discussed by both the community and the ITES-*Ufba* in the Community forum. The final step is the implementation of the project with the participation at public and private financial calls.

This methodology especially intends to involves inhabitants in the construction of the network of solidarity economy in an active way. In this way they are responsible of that action of development and thanks to it they are able to build their future, instead of feeling oppressed by poverty (FREIRE, 2011). Three woman, in fact, entered as employed in the community bank. Even if three woman it is a few

universities and the territory. The main objective is to work on the territory according to academic schemes, but also making the community the main actor of actions. So the extension does not require a search only theoretical, but inspired by the experience on field it returns to the field to produce an infinite process of growth of knowledge. It produces knowledge on the real problems, and it stimulates the production of new research projects.

this is a form of social impact because as illiterate they had not possibility to enhance themselves.

This empowerment of freedom pass also from a cultural empowerment for community, in which it takes place also an enhancement on gender issues. Thanks to public funds it was possible for the community to make every year a show of a traditional dance, “*Samba de roda*”, where the community wholly participated. Everyone has a task, they were involved in sew costumes, programming dance, in the advertising of the event.

In Matarandiba we have, for example, a cultural activity that receives public resources especially. It is an activity made by 120 women in the community which makes in this way a job redemption and preserves the traditional patrimony. They participate in various public calls to support their actions. These sources are for small investments, but necessary. They are needed for the realization of an annual calendar of cultural activities, for the maintenance of these assets, for paying for the structure of the sound for an event of “*Samba de Roda*” and women of our community who sewed clothes. The activities have symbolic importance of reaffirmation of cultural identity and enhancement of these populations and, on the other hand, they have an educational importance, because they enhance a culture not only related to violence and poverty, but to the community strength. (Inhabitants who works in ASOMAT).

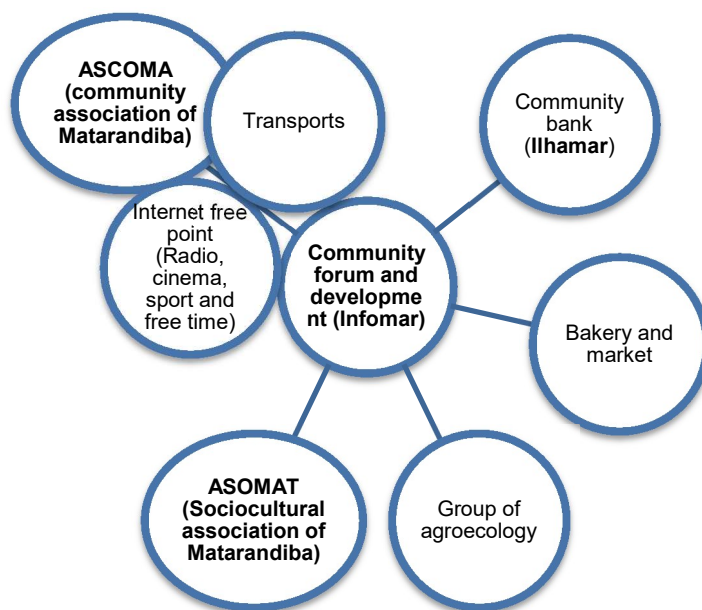
Il Segno works and divides its spaces with an association of *Scarcelli* too, “*Associazione Go’el*”, founded in 2000, that assures a service of school aid for children in the afternoon; it has a free internet-point and it proposes children also different activities and games. They are included in an educational process long term, that challenges them creating important social bonds and experimenting new ways of working. *Il segno* and *Goel* together have done a project called “*Costellazioni*”, that aimed to put together local associations to solve problems. The project was done also with the help of *Università della Calabria*, that analyzed territory and charted 41 local associations. Ones charted it was built an help desk which associations could reach to solve problems and to connect themselves with others. In this way *Il Segno* enhances the creation of networks, strengthening hubs and promoting cooperation. This project was not really immediately used by associations, because the territory is split and fragmented, but it represents a good practice and an example.

Social sustainability it is also done through building local and national networks that allow knowledge sharing and improvements. *Il Segno* it is involved in networks, in majority with actors from North of Italy, in which it collaborate to sell its

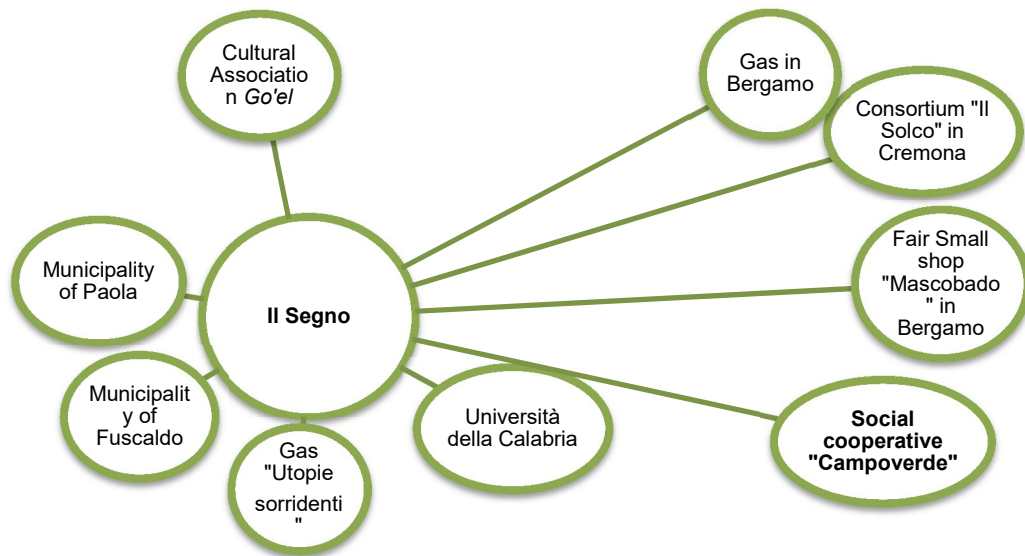
products but also to participate in projects. Social cooperatives from Como, Cremona and Bergamo in the North of Italy went to Scarcelli to offer voluntary aid. This represents a limit to produce local development with other actions. If there were more local associations involved in the process they could benefit of this cultural and economic exchange. These associations exchange their work, with an experience of education and holiday too, because the social cooperative is based by the see. This network allows cooperation between north and south of Italy, spreading also an idea of south that is different from that usual of poverty. Through its products a different idea of south is promoted, and its resources and products are valorized.

In Matarandiba and in Scarcelli both networks are among organizations, meeting also institutions, university and private organizations, building a system of local development. We can compare the two networks:

Picture 1 – Map of solidarity economy network in Matarandiba



Source: Personal elaboration on ITES-UFBA report, 2016.

Picture 2 – Map of network about social cooperative Il Segno

Source: Personal elaboration, 2016.

Today the local network in Matarandiba is divided into two local associations, a forum for community development, an Info center, a community radio station, the community bank, a transport system, a market, a bakery and a group of extractors oysters, that relate to other similar groups in the State of Bahia. Il segno has a strong relationship with some organization in the north of Italy, Gas⁸ in Bergamo, Consortium “Il solco” in Cremona, Fair small shop “Mascobado” in Bergamo, Social cooperative “Campoverde, and on local it is linked with University of Calabria, Gas “Utopie Sorridenti”, Municipality of Fuscaldo and Paola, and the cultural association “Go’el”.

In both we have a well-structured network, crossed by different type of flows, cultural, public and economic. In the first case we have a network concentrated on local, and on the opposite there is a network open to organization in the North of Italy. This puts at the center of the network the community of *Scarcelli*, and makes it discussing with other experiences. In the first case network is more dependent of financial funds, in the second case the autonomy of the experience is stronger and it

⁸ Gas in Italy are “solidarity purchasing groups”. Consumers joint together to buy biological and ethical products from cooperative and actors of third sector. They intend the action of purchase as a way to impact on local development in a positively way.

has a bigger sustainability, but private aids are smaller so the impact is limited. Social sustainability is strong in both cases, because they created social inclusion related to their strength. They are based on social justice and people interviewed feel more independent and believe on their possibility.

4.2 ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Economic dimension is connected with the production of revenue and in solidarity economy it is strictly linked with the meaning of production. A product needs to be useful and have a social impact. It means that economic sustainability is realized producing goods in a sense of collective benefit (Laville, 2009). Sustainability is sometimes done by asking on public funds, but this impacts on autonomy of organizations, it depends on relationship.

4.2.1 Public and private funds

“*Ecosmar*” is the project of solidarity economy developed by ITES-UFBA in Matarandiba. Firstly they created the community bank that gives credit to inhabitants for production and for consumption. With the credit of the bank it was possible to give credit for the construction of a local market and a little restaurant. Credit for the consumption was very useful, in fact until now 100% of habitants have had a loan. They are very little loan, made in social currency, with a tax of 1% or 2,5%. Community bank has a particular way of functioning, because it bases the credit on a personal relationship, on a community rely, and in this way people who couldn't have a loan in a normal bank could invest their money. Others economic activities are decided by Community Forum during the period of planning and implementation of the network. Forum decides what kind of global proposal is suitable to apply in the community. The proposal is global because it doesn't work with only one aspect or enterprise, but it tries to involve the territory wholly.

Public funds are very important for Matarandiba, such as that financed by SENAES (Department of solidarity economy) and *Ufba-Fapex*. Hors of these, the relationships between community and municipality are until today rarely structured. There is not a parallel relationship and a real democratic process of participation in

the structure of public policy. Private funds are also very important, for example those offered by Dow Chemical that is present on the isle with a site of rock salt. This relationship could affect autonomy of community. Dow Chemical is present in the community forum as an actor living in the isle. It gives money as an action of social responsibility, but at the same time this could be a way of controlling the territory. In fact Dow Chemical exploits resources of the community for private profit, and it has the property of a big amount of territory. By reports made by ITES in 2006 and 2008 it is clear that Dow Chemical supported the project financing budget wholly. This kind of relationship carries some difficulties to an autonomous development of the community.

Even if Matarandiba is based on an important action of empowerment it has a few relationship on exterior. Even if the network works very well, thanks to the fact that community bank speeds up the local economy, it has no possibility to engage other territories. In this way it creates a good condition in the community but it doesn't stimulate an inter-cooperation with other communities, and this is a limit. It cannot spread out and create other bonds of solidarity economy to strength an alternative socio-economic system. Matarandiba is in this way a good experiment of evaluation of traditions and cultural manifestations, but it has not the strength needed to impact positively on territory. In fact inhabitants are partly solving the problem of unemployment but they are not autonomous for being independent from funds. Another example of this condition it is the group of fishers. They could work and sell with the other communities on alternative markets but they choose to sell products on the market. It means that they have a less profit and they are not as strong as if they could cooperate with other cooperatives. Cooperation could in fact nullifies their need of appealing to funds for continuing their activity. This reproduces dependence of the territory. Instead of this, solidarity economy involves ways of production and commercialization in the sphere of gift and reciprocity, hors of the sphere of the market, creating news relationships. Otherwise, if the solidarity relationships rest closed into the community, it is not able to produce enhancements hors the community.

The social cooperative had always had a good relationship with the local municipality. It started using a land gave as a loan for 30 years by the municipality. Transforming it in a productive land was a very hard work, thanks to the aid of a lot

of volunteers from the north of Italy. *Il Segno* works in a territory where even normal services are not assured. Its idea is to support also the development of the area making good practices available for the inhabitants. On the land they made some enhancements such as a part of the water main, which was useful even for others farmers. Others producers nearby the land of *Il Segno*, started thinking about the idea of organic production and common goods, such as water main or conversion or commercialization of products. This action has also a gender point of view. One of members said that at first it was strange for others producers of Scarcelli, that three woman had a land to cultivate, and decided to cultivate biological products, with less profit. This showed a different way of producing, working for an agriculture respectful of workers and women. “Gender changes nothing on agriculture, it can only produce better goods” (member of “Il Segno”). So they valorized a common good. To produce a social impact they could build a local network, to create relationships with the others land’s owners.

Through this cooperation there was also a promotion of organic production and social justice. They started producing natural and biological products, and they choose to sell only biological and local products. The majority of its products are sold in the north of Italy, in supermarket that sells biological products. There are a lot of GAS that book products, because are interested in buying Calabrian biological products that usually are difficult to find. Since the birth it has been selling also “Fair Trade” products, promoting cooperation among north and south of the world. They employ people in needs in their activities. They are until now economically sustainable. They in fact sell about 20000 pot of transformed product made with biological olive oil, and during period such as Christmas or Ester they sell in the North of Italy a quantity of 100 Kg of products.

One difficulty exposed by members of the cooperative is that from local associations they had less help; they feel a relationship with a lower trust. This could be the result of the fragmented territory in which the cooperative is based. Cooperating with the north of Italy there is a good promotion of products made in Calabria, and associations are able of doing a good network on territory. Its resources are limited and for this reason its impact on territory is not relevant as it could be a public action. A stronger relationship with local institution could promote a local development. *Il segno* can offer its knowhow and its networks. Even if its networks

are based on personal reciprocity, with strong bonds among people and it is difficult for others to come easily into the network.

In these two case study there is a different approach in relation to funding. In the first case study ITES provides public or private funding for the area, in collaboration with private corporations such as “Dow Chemical”. Even if in the community has been set up an interesting system of micro-credit, there are many factors that threaten the durability of the experience, such as a powerless relationship with the exterior of the community and a weak economic durability. Economic activities are addicted to funds and they are not sustainable on its own. Community is not able to engage a free and independent local development, because everything is linked with the external credit line. When public funds will finish, it will be difficult that they could be able to continue.

One example of this is the community bank, that without public funds cannot go on, even with a fee on each credit that it gives. This kind of dependence affects an autonomous and sustainable process of development. Moreover the relationship with Dow Chemical is not clear and puts into subordination the community, even if Dow gives funds independently with the finality of the project. It is owner of the majority of the isle, and when the network will be strength enough it can happen that Dow will prevent its actions. Until now the rock salt mine is exploiting natural resources of community for its private profit, and it is, without any doubt, a way of having a control on the territory. *Il Segno* has benefited only of public goods, such as land to cultivate and it tries to engage a sustainability on its own, with the sale of products. Matarandiba is so far very weak and activities without funding are not durable on time. This affects the relationship with the territory and the social sustainability. *Il Segno* is a social cooperative, and for this it has an economic sustainability, even if so far weak. It has to improve its sells even on local territory.

A characteristic that both cases have in common is the connection with university that has the important role of accompanying the experience towards social innovation. This is possible through the concept of extension, that can improve knowledge taking information by real case and helping community in solving problems.

In the first network is remarkable that each decision is taken into the community forum. This mechanism creates links among people, and promotes values

of solidarity economy. ITES-UFBA helps in balancing interest, taking care that nobody has an upper hand on others. This process makes the community a relevant actor and promotes a change in cultural habits.

In the second network is remarkable that there are a lot of connections with different social enterprises and volunteer associations. It is a network that doesn't involve the actors of local territory. There isn't a forum on local in which *Il segno* could participate and it acts as a private. Even if its actions mean to have a social relevance a community forum would it makes better.

5 COMMUNICATION TOOLS

In both networks communication tools used are based on the concept of democratic participation like public discussion, open space technology, always using instruments like markers and billboards to evidence important concepts emerging among members. These tools allow the appropriation of a shared idea of development. They build a process of communication that more and more democratic is, more and more it allows a better condition of development for members involved in the process.

Communication inside the organization helps the construction of social bonds among members. Communication out of the organization helps the diffusion of democratic behaviors and it promote the definition of the idea of development. It impacts positively on community trust, and social cohesion.

Communication process in the community assembly in Matarandiba is relevant because members mediate concept as local development, welfare, community empowerment, among people that illiterate for most. All members are consciousness of what it is happening in the project of solidarity economy. The governance is a difficult process to manage and the information settings needs to be managed by technicians of Incubator.

In "Il segno" the communication is strong in long networks and it is weak on local. On local communication process is not able to pass an idea of organization that promote local development. They do not use public assembly to discuss and rarely they promote public meeting to promote a cultural dimension on local territory. It means that their communication settings are not opened to the exterior, and this

weakens the possibility to strength the social cohesion on local among others organizations. The communication and the information about action and intentions of the organization create a bridge with other organizations, and it builds the conditions of an idea of local development shared locally. This could affect in a positive way on social and economic sustainability of both organization and territory.

6 CONCLUSIONS

We analyzed two little community of about 500 people in which there is an experience of solidarity economy that try to involve the community building community empowerment, with a production of values careful of the impact on the environment and on people. Both experiences aim to promote local development through actions that involve inhabitants in an *active* way, working on making them stronger and responsible of their projects. It is relevant that these experiences incubate the territory wholly, giving actors instruments to emancipate themselves from poverty. In *Ecosmar*, in fact, not only one enterprise is incubated, but the territory wholly; in the same way *Il Segno*, because of its specific legislation form, doesn't work only for an economic goal, but it tries to spread its action on the territory, improving empowerment and social inclusion, even if its action is limited because of its resources.

Borzaga (2011) assumes that the exaggerate recourse to funds is a limit of policies that, instead of improving the real empowerment of organizations, make them dependent. It is although necessary that experiences, taking territory as a reference, create themselves as actors of change and social innovation.

These organizations intercept different flows of values: cognitive, economic, relational and environmental. To sum up they work with flows of *buen vivir* (MANCE, 2010). Sustainability of this action is always linked with an active participation of actors, to make the community autonomous. Inhabitants are responsible of what they do in community and they identify themselves in it. Communication process allows an high level of consciousness of this aspect. This responsibility is not immediate, and it needs a work of network that involves a lot of resources. It means that solidarity economy is also a different way of acting that educates people involved at each level, inhabitants and technicians. They promote education on new forms of production, on

solidarity values, a new relation with the environment. They realize a pedagogical process (MANCE, 2003), that envisages an alternative need to become real. It means also promoting a new way of thinking that creates around experiences of alternative. Growing in networks with other experiences, produce a cooperative relationship, that feeds a democratic action. Solidarity economy if is autonomous from external actors can produce development on territory, promote the defense of common goods and promotion of social inclusion and cohesion.

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