

The Role of Private Social Sector in the Targeted Placement of the Mentally Ill in the Regional Contexts of Veneto and Lazio, Data and Possible Scenarios

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on the role of the third sector in supporting the placement of people with psychic disabilities and enhancing their ability to network with other subjects who are involved in a placement provided by the targeted employment system. Data analysis and key concepts were informed by the results of a master's thesis entitled "Psychic Disability: Comparing Job Placement Services". Data from national and international research that has dealt with the ability of these individuals to keep their jobs (Maiello 1997) in relation to coping skills (Koller et al. 2010) will be presented. Subsequently, the research conducted in the specific local contexts of Veneto and Lazio will be considered (Lascioli et al. 2006). Following this, there will be a focus on type A and B cooperatives in the Roman territory in which the variables underlying the enterprise are analyzed (Giangreco 2009) which implies a further subdivision into cooperative typologies: refractory, ineffective and inclusive. This research occurred just before the reform process of the third sector occurred by the law 106/2016*

Keywords: Lazio, Mental Distress, Social Private Sector, Targeted Employment, Veneto, Work Inclusion

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Introduction

This paper analyses the role of the third sector (Boccaccin 2013) in the integration of persons with psychic disabilities and their ability to network with the other actors who, for various reasons, are involved in the job placement provided for by the targeted employment. For this purpose, the main national and international evidence will be presented, with a focus on the Italian local realities of Veneto and Lazio.

The chapter, more or less extensively, deals with all the methods and actors involved in labour inclusion, together with the system of targeted employment and related projects, making specific reference to the role of social cooperation and in particular the one in Rome, using a research included in the text, entitled "Psychiatric disability and work: a possible duo? Socio-medical policies, territorial governance and labour inclusion" (Giangreco 2009). This research also gives specific space to the role and importance of parental associations, which prove to be a positive actor since they are configured as a pressure group for the implementation of active and inclusive labour policies addressed to the intellectually and mentally disabled. However, the chapter concludes by providing the reader the possible scenarios of social cooperation in Italy.

Day Care Centres and Social Cooperatives Compared Differences and Critical Issues: The Italian Case

Some preliminary clarifications are necessary for a correct reading of the contribution. The inclusion of mentally ill in the world of work and, more generally, in socialization contexts, is often the prerogative of day centres and social cooperation bodies. Day care centres are little geared towards the entrepreneurial dimension in unprotected and sheltered contexts, unlike social cooperation, which makes it the focus of its activities. It is possible to state that, except for type D day care centres that are more oriented towards the labour dimension, the other types (A, B, C) tend to reproduce dynamics that can be traced back to the institutionalization paradigm (Di Santo 2013), in the belief that the labour dimension is the exclusive preserve of social cooperatives. Day care centres generally offer a possibility of work that is strongly linked to the institution, often with therapeutic aims, generating a vicious circle with the subject they are trying to cure. At this point, a first element of differentiation with social cooperatives is evident, which, although specialized and linked to well-defined economic balances, tend to let their users experience situations within the ordinary labour market, albeit with strong limitations.

Here are the results of some research that report this trend. As emerges from a survey conducted in the Veneto region (Lascioli et al. 2006), about 20% of the subjects considered have a stay in the cooperative of more than five years, while 50% have an average time of about two years. Furthermore, it is

shown that the guarantee function of cooperatives is greater for those individuals whose productivity level is excessively low compared to able-bodied employees.

According to research carried out by the Centro Studi CGM (Maiello 1997), people who manage to find work outside the social enterprise are only 14.6% of the sample. To this meagre percentage, it should be added that those individuals have severe disabilities. Another trend that is spreading within B-type cooperatives is a form of temporary insertion in non-protected contexts, in order to favour the person's insertion in the ordinary market. In general, the world of social co-operatives tends to make both the function of guarantee and that of transitionality coexist; where this is not possible, they specialize, some protecting one orientation, others another. Co-operatives that tend to defend their guarantee function run the risk of not favouring the person who turns to them, since the action remains bound to the context of the same, just like day centres. On the other hand, those who adopt the transitional regime risk rendering their intervention futile if they do not prove capable of networking with the other actors involved in job placement. A further negative aspect, linked to the pre-employment training that can take place in cooperatives, is the fact that the trainee is often not called upon to perform a future task, but only employed as an ordinary worker, without actually being one. To this picture it should be added that in many cases, even within cooperatives, it is preferred to employ staff whose disadvantage, although present, has little influence on the work to be performed.

Within social enterprises there are two factors that optimize the success of work placements: the first is the degree of experience gained by the cooperative and the second is the presence of a person responsible for work placements for these categories. Some researchers have shown a negative correlation between poor work skills and co-operatives specialized in a certain target of discomfort. In fact, the presence of people with different types of disadvantage improves performance as it stimulates coping skills. This thesis is also supported by the study carried out by McKinsey & Company (Koller et al., 2010), which asserts that the coexistence of people with different types of disadvantage hinders the formation of specific needs. Moreover, the same study emphasizes that starting number of placements too high, not only leads to a decrease in performance, but also to greater difficulties in post-employment. The social cooperative only fulfils its purpose if it is able to enhance the skills of the disabled person, in accordance with their inclinations and training. In most cases, however, this is not possible, as the cooperative does not perform highly specialized work for itself or for others, thus offering limited choice and career possibilities. The legislator, in the Legislative decree 276/03, intended to recognize, through article 14, the value of the work carried out by social enterprises for the integration of disadvantaged people, offering them the chance to be introduced into the world of work for at least once, despite their objective difficulty in entering the ordinary production cycle.

The article is intended to make up for the shortcomings in the application of Article 12 of Law 68/99 concerning provisions on targeted employment, to be understood as the insertion of persons with disabilities into the world of work. On the basis of this analysis it can be hypothesized that type A and B social cooperation may be faced with three possible scenarios in the future (Giangreco 2009)

- **Transitionality:** progressive cancellation of social enterprises in favour of other more efficient subjects;
- **Consolidation of the niche:** recognition of certain areas in which only social cooperation can act, under a monopoly regime;
- **New Community enterprise:** legitimization of its organizational and management form by means of transversal policy initiatives, aimed at creating connections between the social enterprise and other subjects, not only economic, operating on the territory.

Currently, the employment models pursued by the social enterprise that are most widespread in Europe concern transitional employment, i.e. temporary experience on the job, self-financed and permanent employment, with the aim of creating stable jobs, professional insertion with permanent subsidies, sheltered employment aimed at the severely disabled, and finally socialization through productive activities, which does not aim to insert subjects into the ordinary labour market, but to produce socialization through it.

Operating Modalities and Typologies of Social Cooperatives in the Roman Context

The adoption of one of the four models of work inclusion outlined above significantly characterizes the work of the co-operative itself and the way in which it conceives work inclusion for people with disabilities in a broad sense. Moreover, their inclusive capacity is influenced by three orders of variables, such as:

- **Structural variables:** internal characteristics of the company concerning its ability to accommodate workers with disabilities, specifically the degree of organizational maturity of the same, which in turn requires a clear definition of management roles and responsibilities, desiring specialization in a single type of disadvantage and consequently requiring a high percentage of disabled people within its workforce. A facilitating aspect of this process is the small size of the enterprises, which accentuates the propensity to develop networking with other related bodies and organizations, all variables influenced, in the final instance, by the level of governance (Bertin 2013) adopted by the cooperatives considered.
- **Strategic variables:** these concern the institutional mission carried out by the cooperative. They regard the decision made by almost all of these social enterprises to occupy a marginal position in the sphere of active labour policies. In fact, social cooperatives have historically always preferred to interweave stable relations with social and health services, neglecting relations with specific institutions for the activation of employment policies and with companies belonging to the ordinary market. The absence of a common project on a territorial basis has a strong impact on the difficulties of these companies in employing disabled people.
- **System variables:** are related to the policies that regulate the relationships between the local public administration, the labour market and the co-operatives themselves. It is possible to hypothesize that a weak use of legislative instruments in favour of social enterprises has consequently weakened their ability to guarantee stable employment to their users.

Taking into account the variables outlined above, research on social cooperation in the Rome area has set itself the objective of trying to identify the strategies they adopt in the professional fulfillment paths they propose to offer (Giangreco 2009).

This led to the identification of three distinct types of cooperatives with structural characteristics, identities and objectives that refer to different ways of conceiving and addressing the problem of labour inclusion of individuals with psychic distress. From the totality of type B cooperatives operating in the Rome area, those most active on the issue of inclusion were isolated and considered. Twenty-three were contacted, of which only twenty actually participated in the survey. Then, index variables were created in order to bring out the peculiar characteristics of the companies considered, with regard to: organizational development, level of specialization in the field of psychiatric disability, level of receptiveness, and propensity to relationality. From the intersection of the variables considered, three different types of social cooperation therefore emerged:

- **Refractory:** although they show a high degree of organizational development, they do not seem to express a willingness to hire people with mental disorders internally, limiting themselves exclusively to guaranteeing a residual quota of places for apprenticeship experiences. In this regard, from some excerpts of the interviews carried out in the survey, co-operative managers state that they only hire disadvantaged people with adequate skills and for particular contexts, such as single mothers, ex-convicts, ex-drug addicts, but not psychiatric patients. In fact, in line with what has just been reported, it emerges that these enterprises, in order to increase their productivity, prefer to hire disadvantaged, but not disabled people, as they are engaged in activities linked to public bodies, while reserving a small space for the private sector as well. Within the sample considered there are also large and small cooperatives. The larger ones compete in size with private companies, use subsidized financing, and are almost never in relation with employment centres, while the relationship with the Department and Mental Health Centres is strong (Innocenzi 2007).
- **Ineffective:** the cooperatives belonging to this typology were conceived by operators of the Mental Health Department and are based at Day Care Centres. They are highly specialized in the category of disadvantage that can be traced back to psychic discomfort and in Day Care Centres they generally initiate training activities, running training workshops. They are considered fundamentally ineffective because, although they have a high degree of receptiveness, attributable to a high number

of psychic subjects employed, they are not in a position to carry out new recruitments, for reasons due to organizational and strategic factors. In the first case, the discontinuity in the work offered is due to only temporary orders offered by public bodies. In the second one, difficulties are linked to purely welfare interventions and therefore by their non-training nature. These cooperatives are ultimately considered ineffective because they have not developed an 'entrepreneurial project' and are therefore forced to passively submit to events. They tend to polarize resources towards the Day Care Centres to which they belong. This, while on the one hand is an advantage, on the other hand constitutes a strong constraint to access for those disabled people who demonstrate high degrees of productivity. For these reasons, all Day Care Centres belonging to this typology do not fully respond to the original mission of labour inclusion. They are also: young enterprises, lacking an organizational chart, with a mainly informal organization and a low number of working members, both able-bodied and disabled. Moreover, due to the characteristics considered, they are placed, among cooperatives, at the lowest step of organizational development, showing a lower propensity to relationality, being detached from all the contexts aimed at guaranteeing inclusion.

- **Inclusive:** this type of social enterprise does not show prejudice towards the mentally ill, unlike refractory enterprises (Innocenzi 2007), however, being saturated with personnel, it is unable to recruit new staff, unless it gains a new market space.

Inclusive co-operatives are well-established realities, which mainly deal with psychic distress and are also inclusive from an organizational point of view. Unlike ineffective enterprises, there are no structural deficits. Most of their economic income comes from public orders, as well as from small private handicrafts that shelter them from the risk of discontinuity in the employment of workers. More than 50% of those working in cooperatives are disabled, confirming the inclusive dimension of this enterprise. They also have a strong propensity to operate in networks, building positive synergies with other social enterprises, companies and consortiums in a strategic way to promote the labour inclusion of their users. A further ally of this type of cooperatives is the Department of Mental Health, with which they share objectives and projects. These enterprises show a willingness to positively involve all political, institutional and contextual actors in the disabled person's life in order to make him/her part of a process that can lead to strong active policies in this sense. In contrast to ineffective cooperatives, the link they establish with all mental health actors triggers a virtuous circle between the resources employed and the actors involved in reinvesting them. However, this type of enterprise mainly complains of economic difficulties, which are only partially alleviated by a progressive development of private activity.

The total number of users considered in the survey is 192, distributed in the different types of social cooperation as follows: 138 in inclusive enterprises, 37 in ineffective ones, 17 in refractory ones (Giangreco 2009). In line with what has been said so far about inclusive enterprises, they prefer the open-ended contract form (N = 100), guaranteeing however, for all the other subjects considered, part-time contracts (N = 23) or occasional work (N = 15). On the other hand, social enterprises of the refractory and ineffective type prefer the form of part-time work, equally distributed between fixed-term and open-ended contracts. The choice of part-time work is justified by two orders of reasons: the first, functional, concerns the presumed inability of the disabled person to work more time; the second, instrumental, is related to purely economic reasons, since, by working more hours, the disabled person involved would lose the possibility of receiving disability benefits.

Alongside proper work inclusion, the types of social enterprise considered so far also offer the possibility to carry out traineeships, with a double purpose: the evaluation of the disabled person's abilities and the learning, for them, of new expendable skills. Inclusive co-operatives use this situational training instrument in a positive way, by formulating an assessment in order to establish how, for how long and where to employ the users. In refractory social enterprises (Innocenzi 2007), this tool, on the other hand, is only used to improve the degree of skill possessed by the subject with a view to future employment. However, in both types of enterprise, the apprenticeship is not used in a biased manner, as the duration is approximately one year.

As mentioned above, inclusive enterprises paradoxically have fewer possibilities of actually entering the ordinary labour market, despite this they manage to provide a greater number of work placements for their users by trying to overcome this limitation and maintaining a fair proportionality between the mentally ill,

the other categories of disadvantage and the able-bodied. A balance between the different factors guarantees greater performance for the company and the worker who is part of it, it follows that a good choice in terms of planning and management of resources guarantees better reliability for the cooperative itself, compared to others that employ a high number of disabled human resources internally without a clear definition of the objectives to be achieved. The data in our possession suggest that the readiness for work inclusion of psychic individuals is strongly influenced by an identity factor. Inclusive companies place greater emphasis on their own identity, reference values and user needs. This aspect is not found in all the types of social enterprise considered and this has a negative influence on the aims pursued by the co-operative, if the latter is not able to work in a network with all the actors aimed at favouring inclusion, making choices dictated by private interests, the social dimension of the co-operative will not be real, but only a meaningless label. Negative aspects of the concept just described can be found in the following trends: the high turnover of workers with disabilities, the use of trainees as substitutes for the workforce, statements and reflections characterized by a lack of civic sense, the gratuitously offensive and discriminatory attitude towards particular categories of disadvantage, etc. The problematic aspect common to all the companies surveyed lies in identifying resources and objectives that correspond to their culture. From this point of view, it is necessary to have a system that constantly plans and verifies the objectives to be achieved, finding the appropriate means for the pursuit of its goals. All the cooperatives in the sample have a marginal position in the field of active labour policies, due to the following aspects: the structural backwardness of employment centres; the lack of dynamism of social enterprises in the Lazio region; the lack of local strategies on the part of the consortia system, which mainly provide technical and professional assistance services (accounting and tax operations and the carrying out of administrative paperwork) and services aimed at business development (consultancy for the finding of economic and financial resources and project development).

The gradual reallocation of social enterprises to the centre of active employment policies could guarantee greater opportunities for growth with a consequent increase in the number of jobs reserved for the disabled. On the other hand, preserving the current status could only lead the Roman cooperation to survival, in a conservative perspective based on the maintenance of its positions within marginal niches. The real risk could therefore be, in a phase of shrinking public spending, that social cooperation would consider itself as one of the only subjects deputed to solving problems pertaining to its own sphere of competence, such as the employment of disadvantaged people, with the claim of creating development even in the absence of real links with the local production system. Waiting for the desired change, law 381/91 is the only one to protect the instrument of social cooperation. The partial application of this law does not allow the cooperatives examined to fully realize the inclusion of those concerned. This testifies to the fact that local administrations often prefer to achieve short-term savings through the instrument of contracting rather than directly entrusting their services to social enterprises. In fact, the increase of workers with psychiatric disabilities within Roman companies is due, in the first instance, to the ability of policy-makers and institutions to prepare the conditions for them to really take advantage of all the options available under the law. In this sense, the planning of assignments could certainly represent an effective way of matching, especially if the cooperative were organized in a consortium system, capable of sustaining over time the qualitative and quantitative scope of the productive outsourcing of ordinary companies. Indeed, only the right balance between internal and external factors could significantly contribute to enterprise development and the implementation of new jobs, guaranteeing a high level of social growth and related values.

A final note: the evidence presented in this article predates the reform process of the third sector in Italy brought about by Law 106/2016; nevertheless the results remain at the centre of a debate that still retains its validity in the scientific field.

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