

EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL

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Article overview

We suggest a further change in perspective in the field of SE

- from single social enterprises, to social entrepreneurial collectives of organizations.
- building on an explorative case study, we use a grounded theory approach to understand how these collectives work and what are their boundaries.

Exploring Social Entrepreneurship

*New frontiers in social entrepreneurship research are **moving** from the idea of the social entrepreneur as a single individual in favour of a **larger model** based on a **multiplicity** of subjects.*

Single entrepreneur perspective

- (Leadbeater, 1997) The image of the social entrepreneur has been extensively analyzed with respect to **personal traits** and methods of action
- (Dees, 1998) **Differences** between social entrepreneurs and commercial entrepreneurs
- (Alvord et al 2004) **Characteristics** of the social entrepreneur

Single organization perspective

- Seelos & Mair (2007) Organizational **business models** of social enterprises in "Bottom of the Pyramid" scenarios
- Bloom (2009) ways in which social entrepreneurial **organizations** obtain poverty reduction
- (Bloom & Smith, 2010) **Scaling Impact** of Social Organizations
- (Mair *et al*, 2012) typology of **possible models** of social entrepreneurial organizations
- (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2010, 2013) Social enterprises as **hybrid Organizations**

Collective Perspective

- Spear (2006) explicitly proposes to move on from the individualistic general view of SE to a **collective perspective**
- Sud et al (2006): A **collective approach** is needed to solve real social problems
- Kania & Kramer (2011, 2013) & Hanleybrown *et al* (2012) need of "**collective impact** "
- Santos (2012) **Value creation v.s. Value Capture**
- Montgomery et al. (2012) **Collective Social Entrepreneurship:**
"collaboration among similar as well as diverse actors for the purpose of applying business principles to solving social problems"
(pg. 376).

Research Question

What are the mechanisms behind collective social entrepreneurship, and what are the boundaries of the collective enacting it?

Research Method

Empirically investigating the collective as level of analysis through an explorative case study.

Suitable methodology for:

- Theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989, Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2002)

Data collection

Interviews

We defined a list of targeted subjects and interviewed them by means of semi-structured interviews, focusing directly on the case study main issue (Yin, 2003).

8 interviews for a total of recorded 9 hours (567 minutes).

Document investigation

Archival data and documentation produced by companies and available on the Internet

Interviews

Name	Role in MadeInNo	Organization Characteristics	Role	Duration (minutes)
Gianluca Bruzzese	Founder of Sartoria Bruzzese	Firm - Specialized in clothes for adults	Manager/Entrepreneur	75
Fabrizio Miaton	New Partner Emme3	Firm – specialized in clothes for children	Manager/Entrepreneur	45
Deborah Lucchetti	Co-founder FairCoop	No-profit organization specialized in fair trade	President	81
Monica Di Sisto	Co-founder FairCoop	No-profit organization – specialized in fair trade	Vice President	105
Luigi Eusebi	Consultant	Private Consultant	International Broker	73
Laura Fontana	Supportive Buy Group (GAS)	Ethical Purchasing Group	Customer (GAS leader)	66
Paola Letardi	Supportive Buy Group (GAS)	Ethical Purchasing Group	Customer (GAS leader)	68
Silvia Serventi	Supportive Buy Group (GAS)	Ethical Purchasing Group	Customer (GAS leader)	66

Data Analysis

The data analysis is focused primarily on the development of the MadelInNo project and it is divided into three distinctive phases:

- (1) the **birth phase** of MadelInNo
- (2) the **expansion** of the collective
- (3) the launch of **new products**

The case study

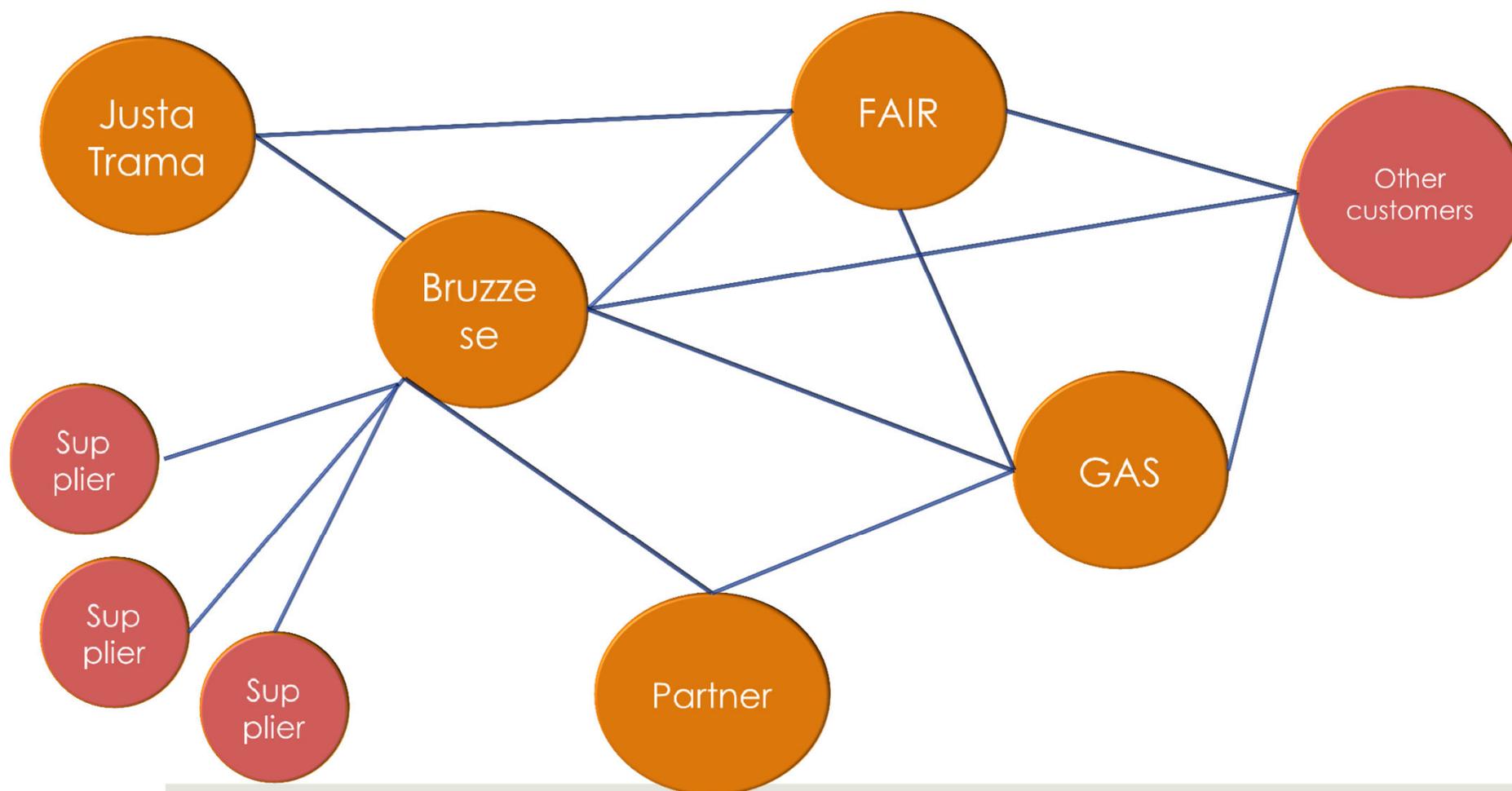


The study is carried out in the Italian textile district based in the North East of Italy (Novara) and specialized in the production of underwear and swimming suits.

MADE IN NO

The “Made in No” project is based on the production and commercialization of a completely eco-friendly line of cotton clothes developed by a collective of actors following bio production, and fair trade principles.

The Made In No Collective



The three phases

□ The **birth phase** of MadelInNo

"As long as we continue to make business individually looking only at our interests there are no chances for any kind of development". (Deborah Lucchetti)

□ The **expansion** of the collective

"The MadelInNo project is first of all a bundle of values. Sharing values, we know that our model is continuously in evolution. It is not important to have established boundaries. It is more important that the values are strong and that we can build relations based on them. We do not need to convince people to be part of the project. [...] It is not possible to collaborate with us without getting involved". (Monica Di Sisto)

□ The launch of **new products**

"In this moment we are not expanding and right now we are trying to re-launch the project and if we find new ideas that work we will try for sure to become a unique MadelInNo entity [...] looking for the best system in which everybody brings her contribution and receive the fair recompense". (Fabrizio Miaton)

Discussion

The **two dimensions** of collective social entrepreneurship model:

- ▣ Ethical/principles dimension
- ▣ Economic value dimension

Ethical/principles dimension

Acceptance of common values/identity

- Any organization needs an identity its members can identify with (Albert & Whetten, 1985). To be part of the collective or not depends on the degree of acceptance of its values and principles.
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"The project we have launched arises from the need to share along with Gianluca a series of needs that we believe are not guaranteed. [...] We tried to involve as many stakeholders as possible. Some have become our collaborators; others have decided not to participate. [...] We try to open the collective to all those who share our principles." (Monica Di Sisto).

Ethical/principles dimension

Transparent relations and management

- Collective price management
- Collective decision on new suppliers and partners (they have to comply with the shared principles)

Economic value dimension:

- Collective collaboration of all partners
- Complementary specialization
- Flexibility

This creates economic value depending on collective action, not on single organizations

CONCLUSIONS

- Adoption of a higher level of analysis
- The collective might be composed by subjects that are not social enterprises
- Explore the dynamics of the relations between the different subjects involved in the collective social enterprise
- the discussion of the boundaries of the collective social enterprise