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SUSTAINABLE RURAL FUTURE

COMMUNITY COOPERATIVES AND RURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ITALY

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Rural areas are facing major challenges and profound changes that directly affect rural populations' quality of life. In this context, a new model of cooperation is emerging in Italy, namely community cooperative, characterized as a model of social innovation in which citizens serve as both producers and users of goods and services, taking on the dual role of entrepreneur and enterprise. These cooperatives are locally rooted economic entities, established by people to generate goods and services across various sectors, with the goal of improving the community's economic and social well-being. The purpose of the study is to analyze how these realities are created and which characteristics distinguish them, highlighting how they act as agents of sustainable rural transformation. The case study analysis is conducted through semi-structured interviews and

analyzed with the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability (MOA) framework. The analysis considers six case studies from different Italian regions, interviewed between November 2024 and November 2025. Preliminary results indicate that human capital and a strong commitment to the common good are key drivers for these cooperative models. These models aim to promote employment, protect the environment, and preserve local culture, ultimately contributing to a sustainable rural future. The direct participation of citizens in these forms of cooperation, as the civil society, is unique and promotes a sense of mutualism that encompasses the entire citizenry to promote the valorization of local resources, such as agriculture and tourism. Highlighting the distinctive elements of these particular cooperative models and their characteristics is crucial for promoting strategies and policies that foster the sustainable and resilient development of rural areas.

Palavras-chave: community cooperatives; semi-structured interviews; case study; moa model; rural development.