

THE COOPERATIVE CADORE: where inclusion and innovative ideas allow asylum seekers and artichokes to establish roots, Italy

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In the very North-East of Italy, at the Austrian border, there is a region called Cadore. It's an extraordinary Alpine environment, where nature and culture mix together in a unique way. That was the place where up to the year 2000s, traditional manufacturing activities flourished around the spectacles business but, due to the global delocalization, it also had to come to terms with unemployment, depopulation and a general "ageing" trend. It was in this context that in 2008, the Cooperative Cadore was born. From the very start, it meant to be a concrete attempt to relocate people who lost their jobs and prevent the "leakage towards the valley". The first vacancies it managed to offer had to do with the conservation of the green spaces, but it soon turned its attention to the tourism sector. Bearing in mind the importance to preserve the outstanding scenarios of the Dolomite mountains, the Cooperative wanted to concentrate on a specific kind of touristic management and that is why very soon it became part of Le Mat social entrepreneurs' circuit. Le Mat social entrepreneurs work in the general interest of local people and places.



They invest their abilities, ideas and resources to build more inclusive, socially responsible communities. So, when in 2011 the Cooperative Cadore decided to give hospitality to less than a dozen of African asylum seekers, it came quite natural to translate the same values to the management of this kind of travellers. Contrary to the Italian mainstream approach, where asylum seekers are hosted in big numbers in large buildings, in Cadore small groups of ethnically compatible people are hosted in flats or small detached houses with gardens. Now, in 2017 the total number of hosts is 54, split into 5 structures, placed in 5 different municipalities. This is a model known as “ospitalità diffusa” (namely “spread hospitality”) which has been recognised by several institutions and scholars as the best answer to the massive migrant flow Europe has been witnessing. Here in Cadore, the young men coming from African and Asian countries spend their days learning the Italian languages, doing some voluntary jobs for the communities, and when it is possible, attending vocational courses. Finding a job for all of them is impossible but in the attempt to give them a real opportunity to settle in this area, the Cooperative Cadore since last summer



has also involved some of them in a new project. The name of the project is "Simbiorti", that is the synthesis of the words "symbionti" (organisms able to live together and take benefit from their co-existence) and "orti" (vegetable gardens). Sinbiorti is an agricultural experiment where different groups of people such as asylum seekers, disabled people, local youngsters, etc. work together. The last challenge is the plantation of artichokes, a typical vegetable grown the Centre-South Italian regions. The novelty is during the harvesting time: while the traditional artichokes are ready during the spring time, here in the very North they grow at the end of July, August. This means that the Alpine artichokes are a real delicacy for the most demanding tastes (and generous pockets!).

The artichokes' plantation is still in a pilot phase of the project, but it looks like it has all the odds to succeed. That would be a big opportunity for new jobs where local and new-comers could find their source of income. That would represent another example of how social inclusion and innovation are key factors in the making of a sustainable and sound future even in among the most threatened and fragile lands and communities of the Alps.