



ECONOMIA MARCHE Journal of Applied Economics

Vol. XL, No. 2, December 2021

The Olivettian oeuvre and the Italian school of local development

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abstract

This study aims at exploring the relationships, largely unexplored, connecting Adriano Olivetti's thought to the Italian local development “school” and specifically to Giorgio Fuà's and Giacomo Becattini's works. As a matter of fact, the Olivettian *oeuvre* shows a true and not negligible common ground with both Becattini's socio-communitarian approach and Fuà's emphasis on the quality of entrepreneurial capabilities in triggering processes of local and industrial development. Focusing on Olivetti's political, social, economic thought as a basis for his conception and action about the communitarian enterprise and the community, we will come to discuss the intersections with a few key concepts in Fuà and Becattini on local development and systems of SMEs. We will conclude with some suggestions on contemporary research on local development.

JEL Classification: O14; O25; R11; R58

Keywords: *Communitarian enterprise; Local development; Organizational-Entrepreneurial Factor; Olivetti; Becattini; Fuà*

acknowledgements

We would like to thank Archivio Storico Olivetti for the bibliographic materials provided for the elaboration of the Doctoral Thesis of Stefania Camoletto (2020). Between “communitarian” enterprise and local community: corporate welfare policies in some Italian contexts. Doctorate in Development Economics and Local Systems. Università degli Studi di Firenze e Trento, a.a. 2018 – 2019; Fulvio Contorti and Sabrina Dubbini for important suggestions on previous versions of this paper; the editorial staff of *Economia Marche* for their support. The paper is however the sole responsibility of the authors.

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1 Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to illustrate the results of a study that we conducted on the relationships, largely unexplored, connecting Adriano Olivetti's thought to the Italian local development "school" and specifically to Giorgio Fuà's and Giacomo Becattini's works.

Adriano Olivetti was a great entrepreneur who, between the mid-1920s and the 1960 (the year of his premature death), led Olivetti S.p.A based in Ivrea nearby Turin, a formidable Italian company at the time, operating in the electromechanical and electronic sectors that the father Camillo had founded, bringing it at a level of international excellence. Olivetti was also a political and social thinker, and his thoughts and visions on the "communitarian" enterprise informed both his action as an entrepreneur and other related initiatives in cultural, political, and territorial planning fields (Olivetti, 1945, 1946, 1956, 1960). The enterprise should be an engine of innovation and technological advance, but also of cultural and social progress, thanks to its organization of internal labor relations and its interaction with related external communities, first of all, local communities and territories, like the Canavese (the area of Ivrea) for the Olivetti. We refer to this path-breaking combination of action and thought as to the "Olivettian oeuvre".

Innovation and cultural progress should be strictly linked also in the operations of the enterprise, according to Adriano Olivetti, who hired at the company, together with scientists and technologists, a pool of brilliant writers, artists, and scholars in social sciences. One of them was a young Giorgio Fuà, who led the start-up and the first years the *Comunità* editions, a journal of economic, social, and philosophical debate promoted by Olivetti, before working in the 1950s for high-level national and international economic institutions (at the United Nations with Gunnar Myrdal, and at ENI with Enrico Mattei). Come back to his region, le Marche, Fuà founded in 1959 the Faculty of Economics in Ancona, and in 1967 the ISTAO business school, where ISTAO stands for "Istituto Adriano Olivetti". In the 1970s and 1980s, as one of the most prominent Italian economists of the time, Fuà animated the national debate on the model of development of the Italian economy, and specifically he proposed the NEC (North-East-Centre regions of Italy) model of industrialization (Fuà, 1977, 1983). This was featured by systems of SMEs localized in territories of well-managed "medium-sized and small towns", a "countryside served by a thick road network", and a "reasonable number of civilian infrastructures and access to services" (Fuà, 1988, pp. 262-263).

The NEC model was one of the pillars of the Italian stream of research on local development; a stream that in the 1970s and 1980s won an international attention around the Italian laboratory on routes of industrialization alternatives to mass production, big vertically integrated companies, large industrial cities. Here, we call it a "school" precisely for this common international projection, even if it included differentiated approaches.

Giacomo Becattini, a professor of Political Economy at the University of Florence, was another of the founders and great contributors of this school. Combining a deep knowledge of the history of economic thought, in particular John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx and Alfred Marshall, with a keen interest in understanding the paths of industrial development in Tuscany from the 1960s, he introduced the concept of "light industrialization" (Becattini, 1969; 1975), anticipating features that the NEC model will have absorbed and generalized. At the end of the 1970s, Becattini proposed the concept of the "Marshallian Industrial District" (Becattini, 1979), which refers to "a socio-territorial entity characterized by the active presence of both a community of people and a population of firms in one naturally and historically bounded area" (Becattini, 1990, p.38). It is well known that the industrial district became, in the 1980s and after in Italy and internationally, a central concept in the debates on models of local development (Becattini *et al.*, 2009).

Becattini acknowledged Fuà as one of his few mentors (Becattini, 2000; Becattini, 2004, p.151). We will recall that in some passages in his writings Becattini referred to the Olivetti (Becattini, 2011). However, neither Fuà nor Becattini explicitly acknowledged an influence of the Olivettian *oeuvre* on the roots of their interpretations of alternative paths of industrial development. Despite this, there is in our view a common ground that the few remarks just recalled suggest and that we propose to illustrate, going deeper on some

key concepts elaborated by the three authors in the overlapping fields of the communitarian enterprise and the local development. We do not find a direct evidence of a straightforward influence. As interesting the discovery of that influence could be in terms of history of thought, our general aim does not point however to such findings. We try to make another more practical point: uncovering this common ground helps generating new qualifications and lines of reflections useful also to contemporary models of local development.

We will start with the main features of Olivetti's political, social, and economic thought as a basis for his conception and action about the communitarian enterprise and the community. After that, we will come to discuss the intersections with a few key concepts in Fuà and Becattini on local development and systems of SMEs. We will conclude with some suggestions for contemporary research and policies on local development.

2 Communitarian enterprise and community in the Olivettian thought

Among Adriano Olivetti's most relevant writings, we consider here *L'ordine politico della Comunità* (1945, 1946), *La Fabbrica e la Comunità* (1956), and *La città dell'Uomo* (1960). These are the works that offer the clearest statements of the philosophy and entrepreneurial project of Adriano Olivetti (AO in what follows). Here we find the cornerstones of AO's reformist project and his entrepreneurial and philosophical proposal that revolves around the "communitarian" enterprise.

The point of departure of AO's reflection was the firm belief that, after the Second World War, the capitalism had to be reconceived and restored. This should be coupled with the reform of the "irresponsible" and inadequate political system of the time (*L'ordine politico delle Comunità*, 1945, 1946). AO thought that a solution could lie in the support to the life of "communities", as the core of a new federal and multi-level political project. Strong and dynamic enterprises, conceived and managed as communitarian entities, could be the true socio-economic engines of such processes, namely places "where *justice* dwells, where *progress* reigns, where *beauty* sheds light" (Olivetti, 1952, pp.42-43)¹. The communitarian enterprise was thus conceived as a social organism providing not only economic value, but also immaterial, cultural, and social prosperity to its stakeholders. Being embedded in, and expressing a particular social, economic and cultural "community", the communitarian enterprise would be both: 1. the centerpiece from which the entrepreneur and other stakeholders build up a shared project of integration and realization of social, economic, political, and cultural goals at an individual and collective level; and 2. the clearest expression of a successful and planned process of integration amongst all those shared instances.

These articulated conceptual premises, written mainly in the 1940s and 1950s, could be considered as one of the first organic theoretical attempts to elaborate a breaking-through business program, in which making profit became a collective process of generation of a diffused wealth, impinging on the organic relation between responsible enterprises and communities identified at various territorial and institutional levels.

¹ In this and in the following quotations of passages extracted from AO's works, English translation from the Italian has been provided by the authors. Emphases have been added on some words by the same authors.

On the practical side, the history of the Olivetti company is considered by some Italian scholars (Ferrarotti, 2001; Gallino e Ceri 2001; Berta, 1980, Zagrebelskij, 2014) as exemplifying the “humanistic” enterprise, by definition; a “socially-conscious” model that took on nearly unique and paradigmatic features during AO’s life². As mentioned above, the Olivettian enterprise is the point of departure and meanwhile the best expression of the possibility of realization of a holistic, often defined “utopian”, socio-political project of “communitarian revolution”. The Olivettian experiment entailed substantial transformations in political, social, and economic assets: “It was necessary to create a fair and human authority that could reconcile wealth in the interests of all [...] and thus demonstrate that the factory was a *common good* and not a private interest” (Olivetti, 1956, p.11).

It is here useful to consider the main sides of AO’s political thought. The alienation of the individual from work was seen as the first problem to overcome, for reaching a private-public, individual-collective “harmonization” of goals and interests. The communitarian enterprise is no longer an organism led autocratically by a single subject, the owner, but it is the essential social core around which the community can prosper in an economic, social, and cultural way. As well, it is no longer the organism that generates capitalistic class conflict, being rather the social institution aimed at solving such conflict. As Gustavo Zagrebelsky skillfully points out in his foreword introducing a collection of speeches by AO to workers (Zagrebelsky, 2014), AO justified the decision by the management of the Olivetti company of partly collaborating with German occupants during the war, with the aim of rescuing the factory and consequently the collective communitarian interests. Moreover, in order to overcome conflicts coming from “alienation”, Olivetti stated, in his well-known discourse soon after the re-opening of the factory in June 1945³, that workers, entrepreneurs and the community should be intertwined by a “reciprocal understanding”, emphasizing how employees had to know “the effects and the aims of their work, in order to understand where the factory goes and why it goes [...], with the purpose of giving a deeper sense to job and to make workers conscious about individual and collective aims of their work” (Olivetti, 2014, p.64).

AO’s reflection switches then from the factory and the problem of its efficient organization to its surrounding environment, the public administration, and the political fields: “I saw that every problem of the factory ... became an external problem and that only who was able to coordinate internal problems with external ones would have managed to find a correct answer for everything” (Olivetti, 1952, p.11). From his practical personal experience as a chief of industry, AO analyzed the political reality and proposed a path-breaking political solution that, according to him, could face problems of societal development. The new political-administrative and economic structure should have been based on “communities”, in order to achieve administrative efficiency and harmonious development of all productive activities: “If I had been able to show that the factory was a common good and not a private interest, then transfers of ownership would have been justified, as would town plans, bold social experiments for decentralizing work... The way of balancing these things existed, but it was not in my hands: it was necessary to create a just and human authority, capable of reconciling all these things, in the interest of everyone. For this authority to be efficient, it had to be invested with great economic powers. It had, in other words, *to do in the interest of everyone, what I had done in the interest of a factory*. There was only one solution: to make the factory and the surrounding environment economically in tune with each other. Thus, *the idea of a Community was born*” (Olivetti, 1952, p.11).

² The Olivetti company enjoyed unprecedented growth in the years that followed the war. It expanded its export business to include markets from the whole industrialized world and became one of the world's mechanical technology industry leaders. Its growing collection of office products had the aesthetic sensitivity that made Olivetti's products famous worldwide, the company well-known for being an industrial giant responsive to the needs of both consumers and workers. During those years, Olivetti made its first major technological breakthroughs by investing heavily on its electronic technology department. In fact, in 1952 AO opened the "New Canaan" in the United States, a listening post on electronic computers; in 1955 the electronic laboratory in Pisa was created; in 1957, Olivetti founded the “Società Generale Semiconduttori” (General Society of Semiconductors), to develop the application of devices that where the start of new electronic technologies. In the 1950s, Olivetti products became worldwide symbols of worship and modernity. Among those, the most famous was the extremely portable typewriter known as “Lettera 22”, which debuted in Italy in 1954 and then was awarded abroad as the “Best designed product of the century”, according to the “Illinois Institute of Technology” in 1959.

³ This speech was published for the first time in Cadeddu (2006).

Communities have different scales, however the basic natural one has to be “neither too large, nor too small [...] but in proportion to mankind”. It should take on interstitial dimensions that coincide with traditional geographical borders (like the neighborhood, the diocese, the precinct, and the constituency) and make possible to create an ideal unity that has “its foundations” in nature and history and in the life experiences of the individuals. It should be consistent with the “the optimal dimension of local auto-government” (Olivetti, 1960, pp.37-51). In the Italy of that time (similarly to present-day Italy), the single municipality was often “too small”, and the province corresponded “neither to geographical criteria nor to human needs”, remaining “an artificial creation”. An effective means of self-government needed therefore “natural geographic borders”, i.e., a “communitarian province” that was conceived practically as a consortium of municipalities where history, traditions and institutional affairs could represent a “concrete element of solidarity” (Olivetti, 1960, p.70). Bringing together “common interests”, this place would be the fundamental level of public administration, making possible to “establish a tangible human solidarity” and a “moral and material unity”. This unity would be expressed in an appropriate town planning, apt to organize the territory and support the collective assimilation of authentic spiritual values (Olivetti, 1960, p.45).

Building on the basic unit represented by natural communities, AO envisioned a federalist project, as a “Federal State of Communities” (Olivetti, 1960, p.70), able to solve inter-classes historical conflicts, relying on a peaceful, widespread and shared convergence of interests, as “it does integrate solidarity and humanistic principles that socialists and Christians share. [...] So, our Christianity and Socialism have taken a new name: Community, and our revolution will be a communitarian revolution” (Olivetti, 1952, p.44)⁴.

The word “spirit”, that runs throughout his political writings, refers to a set of “greater human goals”, or “supra-individual goals” that converge towards the “common aim” of civilization. We have already met the main essential forces of the “spirit” when introducing the communitarian enterprise: Truth, Justice, Beauty and Love. Spirit, this apparently unsubstantial aspect, is as a matter of fact the feature that mostly characterizes AO’s last work, *La città dell'Uomo* (1960), where the emphasis shifts notably from the reformist push to the “spiritual values” of society. In this work, AO underlines the necessary conciliation that must occur and that naturally exists between practical principles and spiritual values (Cadeddu, 2012, p.66).

All the Olivettian oeuvre (entrepreneurial and literary) should be read considering this strict mutuality⁵. “Justice” was described semantically by AO as the institutional form of charity. Town Planning was conceived as a sort of applied aesthetics. Or, again, a community could be defined as a social organism just when it had deep consciousness about its ultimate goals among its members.

3 The Olivetti company as a living laboratory

The Olivetti company and related initiatives, such as the *Comunità* editions and the *Comunità* movement and political party, were the living laboratory of the holistic, seemingly “utopian”, socio-political project of AO.

The Olivettian project is firstly a cultural project of restoration of societal relations, before being an economic project: from here AO’s long-life commitment in educational initiatives at the service of

⁴ At the basis of AO’s works, a complex and motley philosophical culture shapes his thinking, drawing on the works of Saint Augustine, Benedetto Croce, Karl Marx, and more recent contributions such as from French philosophers Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier and Denis De Rougemont (Olivetti, 1952). See also Berta (1980).

⁵ Scholars have struggled to place AO’s *oeuvre* within specific paradigms, given his cross-disciplinary cultural project, dealing with philosophic issues, politics, economics, and city-planning concerns. This should explain the use of apparent oxymoron, as “Entrepreneur of Ideas” (Ferrarotti, 2015) or the “Concrete Utopian” (Mazzei, 2016), which have been molded over the years to describe his emblematic and visionary personality and the uniqueness of his concrete work of experimentation and application.

“communities” through intellectuals' activities, publications by *Comunità* editions, investments in training activities, the building of schools and other cultural initiatives. Being culture “a process of disinterested research of beauty and truth”, it is a lever of political and social reform (Olivetti, 1945, p.60). The purpose of “culture” was to disclose both a universal, philosophical form and a specific, functional form through technical sciences, the scientific management of resources and town planning (Olivetti; 1945, 1960).

To live up to his ideals of an integral humanistic, cross-disciplinary culture, from the beginning of 1950s AO introduced an unbeatable principle of corporate cultural equilibrium in the selection of managers: the so-called “triads principle” meant that for every engineer or technician got hired by Olivetti, the company had also to employ a humanistic intellectual and an expert in legal and economic issues⁶. For example, humanist intellectuals had to contribute in crucial sectors such as design, marketing, staff relations, social services. Therefore, from the 1940s, AO recruited for the team of the top-managers of Olivetti, poets, writers, and intellectuals such as Leonardo Sinisgalli, Tiziano Terzani⁷, Paolo Volponi, Geno Pampaloni, Franco Fortini, as well as economists, sociologists, lawyers, etc. They normally described their experience at Olivetti as “cutting-edge” and a unique period of “humanistic modernity”. For this unprecedented combination of techniques, culture and democracy that operatively turned into a paradigmatic and unbreakable alliance among entrepreneurs, blue-collar workers and intellectuals, Olivetti's is widely considered among the most refined and high-quality entrepreneurial experiences of Italian and western capitalism (Berta, 1980; Gallino e Ceri, 2001). That entrepreneurial experience had all the distinctive features of what Becattini defined as a “capitalism with a human face” (Becattini, 2004). Intellectuals' role, as already mentioned, was absolutely crucial also in formal cultural institutions that were created with the primary purpose of cultural diffusion and reflection on concrete alternatives to the socio-political mainstream paradigms of liberalism and communism⁸.

Industrial and economic growth was the very first, necessary step to realize AO's forerunning reformist program. The Olivetti company, conceived as a living laboratory of a communitarian enterprise, was the point of departure. It had to provide high levels of economic wealth and technical efficiency and this prosperity had to spill over the “communities”. At the time, it was necessary for the large factory, in order to achieve the highest levels of productivity, to start from Taylor's scientific management principles. However, their application could be modified and interpreted in different ways. The idea was to embed them within modern principles of Human Resource Management (HRM) (Berta, 1980; pp.270-274). The adoption of sociological and psychological methods aimed therefore at overcoming workers' “alienation” from work, firstly at remedying “the terrible monotony and the weight of repeated gestures in front of a drill and press [...]” and removing “men from degrading slavery” that the blind application of Taylor's principles implied (Olivetti, 1956, p.35). Some of the sociologists who worked at the Olivetti, especially in the 1950s, such as Luciano Gallino and Franco Ferrarotti, helped to give such sociological and psychological methods a quite revolutionary content for the industrial practice of the time⁹.

Let us come now to the last characteristic of the Olivettian *communitarian* enterprise: democratic representation. Being the “common good in industry a complex function of individual and direct interests of the participants in the work, indirect spiritual and social interests of the same, interests of the immediate environment [...], interests of the territory immediately farther away [...]” (Olivetti; 1956, p.34), AO argued that it was necessary “a balance between the forces that represent the interests so described”. Olivetti's thoughts on the matter were based on the recognition that there was a need for improvement in interpersonal relationships, not only on a psychological and moral level, but also in terms of worker's living conditions. He believed that entrepreneurs had the duty to adhere to solid organizational and moral pillars

⁶ http://www.fondazioneadrianolivetti.it/_images/areastampa/072213085957II%20Fatto.pdf.

⁷ <http://letteramorta.altervista.org/tiziano-terzani-sullolivetti/>

⁸ Cf. Berta (1980), pp.190-201; pp. 245-264.

⁹ AO's right-hand man in the Community Political Movement, Ferrarotti is considered to be one of the undisputed protagonists of the academic institutionalization process of “sociology” in Italy. He was one of the first professors of sociology in Italy, first at Rome “La Sapienza” and thereafter at the Trento University. In order to take a closer look at the company's innovative organization, see Berta (1980), pp. 256-260; 271-272; Butera (2016), pp. 10-42.

and that these ones requested adequate salaries, flexible hours, social services, and democratic labor representations (Olivetti, 1945, 1946, 1960; Gallino e Ceri, 2001; Berta, 1980). He instituted a Management Council in Olivetti in the 1950s as a key representative body for workers' rights, which oversaw the orientation and direction of the production program, the improvement of production, the planning of the plants, and dealt specifically with the improvement of company services, staff planning and training. The Council was the representative body of workers, employees, managers, and unions and, according to many scholars (Berta, 1980; Musso, 2009), was the clearest expression of the democratic, cultural, "universalistic" program that AO wanted to realize within the company and the society. It was formed by the President of the Company, three advisers appointed by him, and eight councilors elected by workers and managers¹⁰. It was an expression of "participated" management, beyond the "paternalistic" tradition of Italian large firms with local roots (Berta, 1980, pp.125-136; Musso, 2009).

By using these strategies and far-sighted actions, the communitarian enterprise was supposed to become a concrete and truly democratic synthesis "beyond socialism and capitalism" (Olivetti, 1945, p.48). One of AO's last proposals was a complete adaptation of the company's property assets: he proposed to overcome the prevalence of shareholder capital and introduce the option of workers' shareholding. AO's proposal was strongly opposed by the Board of Directors and AO's family in 1958. After that episode and the electoral defeat of the Community Party the same year, Olivetti resigned temporarily from his office of CEO. His socio-economic project, often thought of as "utopian" (Cadeddu, 2012; Mazzei, 2016; Ferrarotti, 2001), was geared towards the idea that the factory, where virtuous interactions between different social actors or stakeholders were becoming concrete, was a reflection of what could happen in society.

The Olivetti company under AO is a remarkable tangible anticipation, from a philosophical and operational point of view, of scientific theories and paradigms - stakeholder theory, shared value, and neo-capitalism - which took shape and reached scientific dignity some decades after the Olivettian *oeuvre*.

4 A common ground: Fuà and the O-I factor¹¹

We try now to make explicit the intellectual silver thread that connects the Olivettian *oeuvre* to contributions on local development, in particular by Giorgio Fuà, and in the next section by Giacomo Becattini's works.

Relying on Keynesian theories¹² and a fierce critics of *laissez-faire* in macro-economics, at the micro level Fuà drew on Schumpeterian and Marshallian contributions, and focused on the role of leading entrepreneurs, who should be creative innovators and natural leaders of men, capable to give meaning and direction to the work of others. Entrepreneur-leaders do not strive only for economic profit: rather, following Olivetti's example, they love their products, they are able to motivate their employees without strict application of authority, and they seek to improve the environment that can nurture them (Fuà, 2000). These entrepreneurs, according to Fuà, trigger the economic, social, political, and cultural development of a nation.

In constant interchange with Giacomo Becattini, Sebastiano Brusco and other economists and social scientists, like Arnaldo Bagnasco with his Third Italy model, Fuà introduced the so-called NEC model and acknowledged what was also at the basis of the industrial district model, i.e., the intimate interconnection among the local enterprises, their productive specialization, and the territory, defining an "integrated" productive system. The early process of industrialization in the Marche region and in general in the NEC took place thanks to some historical conditions, among which Fuà mentioned: 1) a general underemployment of agricultural workers and the availability of craft-skills, which triggered to undertake entrepreneurial activities in local manufacturing and trade sectors, mainly small and family-run, financed

¹⁰ For a deep analysis of Management Council's tasks, see Musso (2009).

¹¹ "O-I" stands for "Organizzativo-Imprenditoriale", i.e. in English, "organizational-entrepreneurial". In this paper we preserve the use of the Italian acronym introduced by Fuà and his disciples at the University of Ancona and ISTAO. Cfr. Balloni (1983); Balloni and Iacobucci (2000).

¹² On this issue, the articles by Giorgio Fuà on *Comunità* editions, in particular, *Bisogna dar retta agli economisti?*, *Comunità*, a. I., n.6, October 1946.; G. Fuà, *Schemi tradizionali e materie nuove della scienza delle finanze*. *Comunità*, a. I, n.3, June 1946; G. Fuà (Ed.), *"Dove i governi dovrebbero trovare i quattrini?"*. *Bibliografia economica*. *Comunità*, a. IV, n.8, May-June 1950.

directly from family savings; 2) a general improvement of transport and communication infrastructures (Fuà, 1983).

This type of industrialization prevented labor conflict and boosted a climate of collaboration, there being short social distance between the new entrepreneurs and their workers. After the phase of the takeoff, in a second phase the local industries should start and, in successful cases, started to achieve greater technical and organizational standards thanks to two main levers that are typical to the model itself: an improved organization of the inter-firm relations and an increased specialization in quality and small-scale production (the so-called “made in Italy”). In brief, the NEC regions are characterized by a production system alternative to mass production and are able, through upgrading, to satisfy also high-quality and niche demands (the core of the made in Italy). The small size scale succeeded because it was the most easily viable route for development based on local forces and endowments. On the other hand, firms should and are called to co-operate in order to prevent diseconomies (which would originate from the small size scale), also thanks to the public and private provision of local public goods.

On the practical side: “Fuà understood the need for training, in order to strengthen and broaden the Italian entrepreneurial culture and, in this perspective, he conceived two farsighted projects”. We have recalled already the foundation of both the Faculty of Economics and the Istituto Adriano Olivetti. ISTAO had “the purpose of carrying on research in subject of entrepreneurship and management, and conveying practical managerial education”¹³. Since its inception in 1967, ISTAO programs have in fact been conceived to reproduce the convergence of three lines of analysis that were already within AO's philosophical and entrepreneurial dimensions: the social and civil action of the entrepreneur in regards to the interests of the community, the need of combining efforts in technological innovation with ethics and aesthetics, and the understanding and care of the themes and issues of the work-life balances (ISTAO, 2018, p.466).

Some studies highlight how, especially in the past, Italian entrepreneurship education lacked adequate training programs that would provide ways of overcoming its “infancy” stage (Dubbini, Micozzi and Micozzi, 2013). ISTAO, on the other hand, has become a spearhead for training managers and entrepreneurs at a national level. It aims at training managers and entrepreneurs by conveying “Olivettian” principles and adapt to new training needs by interpreting the same principles in face of contemporary challenges for responsible entrepreneurship, such as to enhance: Social intelligence, including relationship skills and responsible leadership; Cross-disciplinary approaches to adaptive thinking; Cross-cultural skills for navigating and bridging multicultural contexts; Technical skills for the use of new media and visual design (ISTAO, 2018, pp. 464-465).

Fuà and his disciples precisely brought in local development studies the view of the importance of an increasing entrepreneurial and managerial culture. The key concept here was that the development of systems of small firms needed to grow local organizational-entrepreneurial factors (O-I) upon a traditional basis of local social capabilities that include cohesive social relations and practical productive skills (Balloni, 1983; Balloni and Iacobucci, 2000). Fuà considered entrepreneurial capabilities as pivotal factors in determining learning and innovation processes within the enterprise, which could spill over the community and trigger a high-quality territorial know-how.

Despite that Fuà entitled his school of higher managerial studies to Adriano Olivetti, taking inspiration from him (ISTAO, 2018), we have not been able yet to find signs of explicit, semantic linkages between Fuà's Olivettian experiences and his studies on local development¹⁴. However, it seems highly probable that Fuà's emphasis on the “O-I” factor derived from his previous work and life experience in close contact with AO.

¹³ http://istao.it/old/en/giorgio_fua/.

¹⁴ In a note in memory of Fuà, Fulvio Coltorti (2008), himself a Fuaian alumnus who led the Research Department of Mediobanca under Enrico Cuccia and after, gives a couple of hints. First, the development of a set of medium sized manufacturing firms with local roots in systems of small firms and trans-local international organization could be seen as a third phase of development in the NEC model. Second, Fuà would have matured the roots of the NEC model in the second half of the 1960s, also looking at the increasing difficulties of many large manufacturing companies, included the Olivetti and ENI, and therefore of the related model of Italian capitalism that had led the Miracle of the 1950s. See also Becattini and Coltorti (2006). It cannot be excluded that here are the roots of the divide on an explicit acknowledgement of the Olivetti's legacy, between the Fuà of the NEC and the Fuà of ISTAO.

5 A common ground: Becattini and the industrial district

Coming back now to Giacomo Becattini, we know that he, probably helped by Fuà, visited the Olivetti company soon after he graduated in the early 1950s. Becattini did not acknowledge, in his turn, an Olivettian lineage impinging on his main concepts of industrial districts and local development, even if he sometimes referred to the Olivettian experience. However, contrary to Fuà, he and his disciples used deeply the concept of community, communitarian ties, communitarian markets, etc. in their works.

A first and clear assonance concerns the Olivettian identification of the territory of the “communitarian province” (see section 2) and the concept of a “local system” developed by Becattini together with Fabio Sforzi in the 1970s and 1980s¹⁵. The local system is a place where a community of people lives and works, with a great deal of persistently overlapping experiences; possibly it corresponds to a set of contiguous towns, villages, rural areas, with a principal town or city. According to Becattini, the local system is the necessary (though not sufficient) territorial dimension for the auto-reproductive dynamics of local development.

Coming to communitarian concepts, let us recall Becattini’s paper commenting on Porter and Kramer’s shared value proposition (Becattini, 2011). Shared value entails “creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges” (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p. 4). It is an attempt to connect profit and social progress in the enterprise, where social value encompasses all the company’s stakeholders. Becattini merges masterly the proposal by Porter and Kramer with the example of the Olivetti company. It is interesting to look at the following evocative passage.

“Let’s examine a case, which fits reasonably well, I believe, in Porter’s current studies. What may mean: reconciling the Company’s profit function with the function of social utility of a place, proposed by P.K.? It can mean, for example, weighing the various plans of production of Olivetti with the supposed peculiarities and preferences of Canavese people. And vice versa, to collocate possible development plans of the Canavesians within the operative strategy of Olivetti. This constitutes an unusual situation for economic studies in which, ex ante, the needs of Olivetti are introjected by the population of the Canavese and/or the recognized needs of Canavesians are incorporated in the Olivetti strategies. This does not mean (notice!) allocating the profits of the Olivetti, whatever their origin, to meet certain needs of the Canavese, but to discuss the long run needs of, and possibilities for the simultaneous progress of Olivetti and of the Canavese in advance, around a table, simultaneously and constructively” (Becattini, 2011, p.5).

Although Becattini, apart from this mention, did not make a more explicit reference to Olivetti throughout his academic work, a conceptual and semantic nearness, and sometimes a theoretical overlapping, are quite evident in the use of the concept community, which seems to be the true core of the two authors’ works. Obviously, their perspectives are different. On the one hand, Olivetti, as a strong entrepreneur, in analyzing the surrounding reality, considered the (large) communitarian enterprise as the first lever for communitarian “local” development. On the other hand, the economist Becattini, dealing mainly with decentralized models of economic development, struggled for understanding why and how a community of people opted for a peculiar, small-enterprise centered development path. Despite these different starting points, their thought converged on the awareness that the (local) community could give a social shared sense to the economic production, emphasizing the true consistency of a peculiar historical *spiritus loci* with the productive know-hows that the economic production was able to unveil (see also Dei Ottati, 1995).

The community was furthermore considered the optimal solution for local auto-government by Olivetti (1946): the local community (or communitarian province), the first in his multilevel political “communitarian” layout, was required to reveal local “expressions of life” (Olivetti, 1960, p.60) in order to strengthen local “communitarian ties between workers and farmers”. Similarly, according to Becattini, the community was apt to give a sense of direction to the local production. Relatedly, both authors pointed out the pivotal role of the family, seen by Becattini as a crucial societal unit that can rebalance strict market

¹⁵ The concept of local system was applied by Sforzi also to develop with ISTAT the geography for the statistical approximated identification of industrial districts in Italy and elsewhere (see Boix, Sforzi, and Hernandez, 2015).

rules (Becattini and Bellanca, 1986); and by AO as the first and essential unit of communitarian out-of-work relations (Olivetti, 1946).

We do not know for sure from which sources Becattini got the concept of community, but we can hypothesize this concept, characterizing his cross-disciplinary approach, was probably a credit of exchanges with sociologists, the interaction with the legacy of his master at the Faculty of Economics of Florence, Alberto Bertolino, and the reflections on Marshall socio-political view of economy in which the “social nature” of men was a central feature (Becattini, 2010, p.49). In particular, the concept of community in Becattini is related to that of “communitarian culture”, an expression that gradually replaced the original formulation coming from Alberto Bertolino’s “social culture” (Becattini, 1978). Bertolino’s emphasis on the need to consider local institutional and cultural asset and, obviously, the interconnections among social and economic spheres when analyzing the economic development/ underdevelopment of an area, certainly influenced Becattini’s thought. Therefore, there is no clear evidence connecting Becattini’s directly to AO’s “community”. However, the societal value and the productive experiences are strictly intertwined in their viewpoints, and this interconnection expresses, in different ways, through the local sense of belonging, the true engine of endogenous productive experiences.

We can trace in AO’s thought, specifically in his last work *La città dell’Uomo* (1960), some other crucial intersections. One is the deep attention of AO to the problems of territorial planning in relation to community. This matches with the definition of “territory” as outlined by geographers, urbanists or economists contributing to local development studies (Becattini, 2015b). Becattini had appositely a line of reflections on the importance of territorial planning, again in relations to some of Marshall’s suggestions about the life in the cities and the “garden city movement”, but also to place-based approaches to the problems of environmental sustainability (Becattini, 2015a; Trullen and Boix, 2017). In Becattini’s latest contributions, this was linked to the vision of the reproduction of the “conscience of the place” - through an indissoluble alliance between “critical economists” and “critical city planners” (Becattini, 2015a, pp. 115-140; Magnaghi, 2000).

6 Perspectives and conclusions

Becattini focused on the issue of the industrial district to shed light on the “virtues” of the place-based combination of communities and flexible production systems based on populations of small firms. Fuà always understood Becattini’s contribution maintaining that the “industrial district” model was just one of the possible forms that “systems” made up of small firms could take on within trajectories of development of territories (Fuà and Zacchia, 1983)¹⁶. Moreover, in comparison to Becattini, Fuà dwelt more on critical issues and weaknesses of such decentralized models, in particular size limitations and the need to strengthen managerial skills and entrepreneurial culture.

The Olivettian *oeuvre* shows a true and not negligible common ground with both Becattini’s socio-communitarian approach and Fuà’s emphasis on the quality of entrepreneurial capabilities in triggering place-based processes. Summing-up:

- The peremptory critics to an “apolitical economy”, to use Becattini’s words or, simply, the common critics to purely liberal, laissez-faire economic assumptions, with the reference to Keynes’ principles, is explicit in AO, Fuà and Becattini’s works; economics for both Fuà and Becattini is a discipline whose duty is the understanding of the means that can help people move towards a better life.
- The role of community and conscience of place in Becattini and the role of the O-I factor in Fuà may be ideally associated with the significance and social value of the AO communitarian enterprise and the Olivettian responsible entrepreneur who strives for dealing with all the stakeholders.

¹⁶ On the multiplicity of paths of local development and forms of systems of SMEs compare also Garofoli (2002) and Becattini *et al.* (2000).

- The importance of a coordinated, multi-level planning dealing with social, political, economic and cultural issues shared by the communities is clearly expressed through AO's multilevel communitarian project.

The three points not only summarize the findings on the common ground, but also relate to lines of contemporary research on local development and organizational performance. The reference to the common ground could provide such lines some crucial hint on foundations and perspectives.

- a) The contemporary debates on new industrial policies or strategies of productive development are vibrant (Aiginger and Rodrik, 2020), and are a field of possible convergence of various and somehow unrelated elaborations on the growth of opportunities for “good jobs” (Rodrik and Sabel, 2020), the new markets and demand from collective needs of local communities (Cappellin *et al.*, 2020), the university engagement in ecosystems of business and social innovation (Balloni, 2015; Compagnucci and Spigarelli, 2020; Bellandi, Donati and Cattaneo, 2021), the cultural enhancement of paths of local and regional development (Innocenti and Lazzaretti, 2019). The Olivettian principles of truth, justice, and beauty, and their practical combination in paths of communitarian and enterprise development, also following the models of Becattini and Fuà, suggest a key for a stronger convergence.
- b) We have seen that the Olivettian *oeuvre* is easily linkable to the action and research on frontiers of corporate social responsibility, in particular the shared value of Porter and Kramer (2011). We can add also a current stream of research in management on the so-called “organizational beauty” (Cavaliere *et al.*, 2020). Becattini argued that the true root of shared value is by definition communitarian and place-based, though operating at multi-scalar and also global levels, as the Olivetti's history teaches. This suggestion needs to be developed further (Paolazzi, 2018; Camoletto and Bellandi, 2019). In particular, the contradictory roles that medium to large firms with local roots and global networks may play in relation to local systems of small firms (Cainelli *et al.*, 2006; Coltorti, 2013; De Propriis and Crevoisier, 2011) could benefit from the conception of communitarian shared value played as a key to understand the strategic and ethic foundations of the trans-local firms.
- c) Contemporary streams of research on territorial (local/regional) development tries to combine evolutionary forces and agency (Hassink *et al.*, 2019; MacKinnon *et al.*, 2019; Torre 2019). We have seen that the question was already on the table decades ago, with the non-resolved nucleus of difference between the approach of Becattini featured by Marshallian organic dynamics, and that of Fuà more reliant on the entrepreneurial drive according to Schumpeterian-like views. Actually, the explicit use of multilevel governance formulae expressed within the local development literature, also in relation to the role of frames of specific collective goods (Brusco, 1992; Pichierri, 2001; Trigilia, 2005; Bellandi, 2006), has already identified the keys for a fruitful combination of those approaches. Nonetheless, a more explicit reference to the common ground with the Olivettian *oeuvre* could perhaps have allowed Fuà and Becattini to open an early route of combination. Today, the reference to the common ground not only might strengthen the development of the contemporary stream recalled before, but also provide a clue to political programs and meta-governance approaches needed for contemporary paths of communitarian development (Bellandi, Plechero and Santini, 2021).

Finally, this paper presented a first attempt to shed light on a so far unexplored silver thread that quite implicitly connects Adriano Olivetti's thought to the Italian “school” of local development. The analysis of the Olivettian *oeuvre*, made of action and thought, found evidence of a common ground both with the Becattini's emphasis on the communitarian aspects characterizing typical industrial districts and with the importance accorded by Fuà to the strengthening of the competences of entrepreneurs in driving virtuous local development paths.

The training courses dedicated to new entrepreneurs, managers and researchers at ISTAO under an Olivettian perspective of communitarian responsibility is still alive, and keeps on trying to interpret fruitfully the action side of the Olivettian *oeuvre* in face of contemporary challenges to responsible economic action. On the critical thinking side, we have underlined just above three perspectives of contemporary research where an explicit reference to the common ground could provide crucial contributions.

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