

## Long Abstract – Monographic Section

*SOCIAL AGRICULTURE BETWEEN NEW AND OLD SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY INNOVATIONS.*

*edited by Angela Genova and Tiziana Tarsia*

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*Multifunctionality as territorial construction: tensions and contradictions between the institutionalization and the practice of Social Farming in South Tyrol*

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The paper explores the embodiment of social agriculture (SA) in South Tyrol, with a particular focus on the multifunctionality of rural enterprises and the tensions between institutionalization and innovative practice. Drawing on recent national and local policy frameworks, the study examines how agricultural enterprises are increasingly diversifying their activities beyond traditional production.

Despite the establishment of institutional support mechanisms by the Provincial law, the development of the SA sector in South Tyrol remains constrained by the regulatory framework, that inadequately recognizes the innovation brought by already existing hybrid organizational models.

These models, pioneered by local actors, offer innovative solutions that respond to the socio-economic and environmental challenges of a rural territory. In this regard, the paper highlights the contradictions between formal, institutional definitions of social agriculture (SA) and its dynamic, socially constructed reality on the ground.

The empirical core of the study is based on three paradigmatic examples that exemplify hybrid forms of social agriculture. Through a qualitative based research, including interviews and field visits to selected organizations in South Tyrol, the paper illustrates an ongoing trend of the hybridization of social and agricultural functions.

1. Vintlerhof in Brixen (Bressanone), an individual agricultural enterprise operating in a peri-urban context, combining certified organic production with a wide range of social services, including work integration for marginalized groups (migrants, and women escaping violence), educational farm activities, and agri-nursery services. The farm leverages strong territorial networks and partnerships with local actors, providing individualized integration projects.

2. Vinterra Social Cooperative (Malles): a type B social cooperative established in 2014 in Vinschgau, Vinterra's mission is to create attractive, sustainable employment opportunities for disadvantaged individuals by integrating agricultural production, on-site processing, direct marketing, and hospitality services—all managed according to organic and sustainable principles. Vinterra demonstrates how multifunctional rural enterprises can address both social inclusion and environmental sustainability, while also responding to market demand for regional and organic products.

3. Säegemüllerhof in Pusteria, is a facility of the Social District with a hybrid management

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model blending public and third-sector approaches. Publicly funded by the Province, the center

rehabilitates individuals with psychiatric disorders, accessed via the Mental Health Center. Revenue from the sale of organic farm products and crafts, like wool, partly supports the facility and provides wages to residents involved in production. Sägemüllerhof operates with significant organizational independence, adopting social enterprise principles.

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