

Social bricolage and social business model in uncertain contexts: insights for the management of minor cultural heritage in Italy

Adriana Scuotto, Mariavittoria Cicellin and Stefano Consiglio

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to analyse how social entrepreneurship organizations that use approach of social bricolage adapt their business model to develop social innovation. The past decade has witnessed a surge of research interest in social entrepreneurship organizations (SEOs). This has resulted in important insights concerning their role in fostering social challenges. The crisis of both public and private profit-driven models meet the arising of new initiatives designed to meet the minor and often abandoned cultural heritage consumption need. Drawing on the domain of SEOs and social bricolage framework, these initiatives are able to pursue the social and the economic mission together and to produce social innovation.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper aims to analyze how SEOs that use strategies of social bricolage can improve the development and diffusion of social innovation. Employing in-depth multiple comparative case studies of 15 cultural SEOs in the South of Italy, through the analysis of semi-structured interview, the study enhance current understanding of the social dimension of SEOs.

Findings – First results show that SEOs in the domain of minor cultural heritage adopt an innovative business model and in particular a social business model unraveling organizational dimensions falling into the social bricolage. The relation between social bricolage dimensions and social business model criteria produces outcomes in which social innovation can be expressed.

Originality/value – This study enhances current understanding of the social dimensions of business model involved in social innovation production of cultural SEOs. This research aims to be a benchmark of the social innovation initiatives in the field of minor cultural heritage management.

Keywords Social innovation, Social business model, Innovative business model, Minor cultural heritage, Social bricolage

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is one of the most discussed issue in management literature (Dacin *et al.*, 2011; Mair and Marti, 2009; Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Janssen *et al.*, 2018). As well known and established in the literature (Mair and Marti, 2006; Marshall, 2011; Van de Ven *et al.*, 2007; Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Seelos *et al.*, 2011; Mair *et al.*, 2012) social entrepreneurship is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of organizations pursuing innovations and aiming at diverse social and environmental challenges. Social entrepreneurship is characterized not exclusively by the pursuit of economic goals but also by the pursuit of social and environmental goals (Dees, 1998; Mair *et al.*, 2012). This has resulted in important insights concerning the role of social entrepreneurship organizations (SEOs) in fostering social challenges and in creatively and innovatively coping with resource-constrained environments.

SEOs have been identified as a form of social entrepreneurship at community level, an alternative and/or a complement to the action of states, governments and private actors to address unmet social needs and/or poverty-related social needs (Seelos *et al.*, 2011).

In the past two decades, several streams of studies have focused on SEOs. A first one has examined their role as significant organizational players in market economies, exploring their contextual and structural dimensions and the sustainability of their economic and social outcomes (Moss *et al.*, 2011; Bacq and Janssen, 2011; Zollo *et al.*, 2016).

A second stream has analyzed the hybrid forms of SEOs to be innovative (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Zollo *et al.*, 2016; Zollo *et al.*, 2018). The hybridization of SEOs is basically anchored in the approach of bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Janssen *et al.*, 2018; Davies and Doherty, 2019; Ciambotti and Pedrini, 2021) that represents a significant opportunity to address emergent social needs and to offer inclusive services to the communities. Nicholls (2009) argues that the problem-solving attitude of social entrepreneurs, characterized by a continuous generation of innovations, particularly fits with the bricolage behavior. According to Janssen *et al.* (2018), SEOs and bricolage share important characteristics that make them very close one to another.

Bricolage in social entrepreneurship (also called entrepreneurial bricolage; Zollo *et al.*, 2018) allows to identify unserved markets in need (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; Bacq *et al.*, 2015) where to develop new contents, to capture new opportunities (Baker and Nelson, 2005), to advance novel approaches, to attract and use relevant resources. Moreover, several scholars (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; Linna, 2013; Desa and Basu, 2013; Desa and Koch, 2014; Bacq *et al.*, 2015) have highlighted that the ability of SEOs to develop social innovation and to produce social change directly depends on their bricolage strategies and bricoleurs' behavior. In particular, we draw on its social dimension and on the model of social bricolage, as *ad hoc* theorized by Di Domenico *et al.* (2010).

A third important stream of managerial and entrepreneurial studies stress that SEOs' social bricolage engender their business models innovation (Zott and Amit, 2008; Guo *et al.*, 2016; Servantie and Rispal, 2018) and the interdependence between social, cultural and economic outcomes to produce social innovation (Nicolopoulou *et al.*, 2017; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021).

So far, relatively little attention, however, has been paid to the business model innovation of SEOs that use social bricolage. Only a few studies have analyzed which business models SEOs can adopt to combine both economic and social mission by producing social innovation (Mair and Marti, 2009; Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; Desa and Basu, 2013; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021). Moreover these studies are mostly focused on bottom of the pyramid (BoP) markets (Linna, 2013; Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016) and on transitional and developing economy contexts (Guo *et al.*, 2016; Desa and Koch, 2014; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, to defining a specific approach to business model is crucial for sustaining the long-term growth of organizations that develop social innovation.

Drawing on the constructs of social bricolage, social innovation and innovative business model (Bhattacharyya *et al.*, 2010; Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Zollo *et al.*, 2018; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021), we aim to fill this gap. Our study aims to analyze how SEOs that use strategies of social bricolage can improve the development and diffusion of social innovation.

There are strong and recent calls in the literature for the understanding of the optimization of scarce resources in an innovative way in SEOs (Desa, 2012; Desa and Basu, 2013; Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Molecke and Pinkse, 2017) and their organizational models that make it possible to respond to an unsatisfied social need (Pedrini and Ciambotti, 2019; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, there is an interesting call for the application of these concepts in different socio-cultural contexts with multiple case studies, especially in economically developed countries (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Janssen *et al.*, 2018).

In the present study, we draw on the studies of [Di Domenico et al. \(2010\)](#), [Zollo et al. \(2018\)](#) and of [Gasparin et al. \(2021\)](#) for the analysis of business models of SEOs.

We see that SEOs using strategies of social bricolage are able to produce social innovation by adopting innovative social business model, in terms of organizational and entrepreneurial choices for social value creation and for emergent social challenges in complex contexts ([Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016](#); [Michelini, 2012](#); [Yunus et al., 2010](#)).

We explore our aims by addressing a main research question:

RQ1. How do SEOs adapt their business model to develop social innovation?

Using in-depth multiple comparative case studies and semi-structured interviews, we enhance current understanding of the social dimensions of SEOs and the innovative business model involved in social innovation production.

We focus on the minor cultural heritage in the South of Italy because in the past decade, SEOs play an increasing crucial role in the enhancing of minor and often abandoned (from both the State and private-market actors) cultural heritage sites, restoring them for the communities, generating economic and social value and employment opportunity ([Consiglio and Riitano, 2015](#)). Moreover, cultural and third sector SEOs used to play a crucial role in the South of Italy marked by a socio-economic-structural weakness, intervening in severe situations of social distress being close to the most fragile people, using culture ([Borzaga, 2020a](#); [Consiglio and D'Isanto, 2020](#)). Their social infrastructures and their capacity for innovation demonstrated in facing moments of recession, economic difficulties and, currently, the pandemic are essential for the strengthening of communities and therefore for social and economic development.

Our study aims to contribute to the academic debate in several distinctive ways.

Building on these considerations, first, we contribute to the SEOs literature by exploring the main features of cultural SEOs and their social dimensions ([Johnson et al., 2008](#); [Yunus et al., 2010](#); [Michelini, 2012](#)).

Second, we extend and enrich studies on social bricolage ([Di Domenico et al., 2010](#); [Fisher, 2012](#); [Molecke and Pinkse, 2017](#); [Zollo et al., 2018](#)). We intend to offer new insights for the study of social bricolage and innovative social business model together for the development of social innovation ([Gundry et al., 2011a, 2011b](#)) and optimization of scarce resources in an innovative way. Moreover, we further refined the studies by capturing the peculiar industry of cultural heritage in the South of Italy.

Third, by combining two crucial approaches: social bricolage and social business model, we try to offer a novel strategic framework for the study of SEOs, where social and cultural goals, as well as the paths to market and economic outcomes, are equally prioritized by them to produce social innovation.

The remainder of this article is organized into four sections. Section 2 describes the background and framework connecting our two approaches. It analyzes SEOs and social bricolage behavior in the production of social innovation and develops the concepts of SEO's business model innovation in the literature. Section 3 introduces the research design and the study site, explaining the criteria for analysis, methodology and procedures for data collection. Section 4 discusses and compares the cases, developing a strategic framework for SEOs in the management of minor cultural heritage. In Section 5, we conclude discussing contributions and conclusions.

2. Background and framework

2.1 Social entrepreneurship organizations and social bricolage

Social entrepreneurship signals the imperative to drive social change, and it is that potential payoff, with its lasting, transformational benefit to society, that sets the field and its

practitioners apart (Martin and Osberg, 2007). Following the definition of Mair and Marti (2006, p. 37), social entrepreneurship is “the process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs.”

In so doing, processes of social entrepreneurship often overcome established conventions: span sectorial boundaries (Austin *et al.*, 2006), experiment with different ways of organizing (partnerships, alliances and joint ventures) (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Seelos and Mair, 2007) and use a range of legal forms including for-profit, not-for-profit and hybrid legal statuses (Dorado, 2006).

Yunus (2009) claims that social entrepreneurship is a broad concept about creating innovation measures that can help people in need. Dees *et al.* (2002, p. 5) have pointed out that “social entrepreneurship is not about starting a business or becoming more commercial. It is about finding new and better ways to create social value.” We therefore follow these definitions of social entrepreneurship involving different kinds of actors where individuals or groups use entrepreneurial tools to solve social challenges (Mair and Marti, 2006; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Seelos *et al.*, 2011; Mair *et al.*, 2012).

In this domain, SEOs represent an innovative melting pot of social entrepreneurship combining two traditionally distinct models: on the one hand, a social welfare model that pursues its societal development mission and, on the other side, a revenue generation model that pursues profit through commercial activities (Battilana *et al.*, 2012):

Linzalone and Lerro affirm “A renewed management approach of social enterprises’ managers should move the management model of a social enterprise from a full ‘solidarity oriented’ to a moderately ‘business oriented’ one. A business management oriented approach in the management of social enterprise appears necessary to face the challenges that social service market is launching” (Linzalone and Lerro, 2014, p. 75).

SEOs can adopt a for-profit or a nonprofit legal form in specific industries, such as, education, healthcare, young/women/migrants inclusion, cultural heritage and in the general field of third sector (Mair and Marti, 2006; Seelos and Mair, 2007; Leadbeater, 2007; Seelos *et al.*, 2011; Mair *et al.*, 2012). Following Lisetchi and Brancu (2014, p. 90), associations, foundations, cooperatives, social enterprises, mutual organizations and commercial enterprises with a social purpose (e.g. work integrating social enterprises), are “outputs of the social entrepreneurship process.” According to Borzaga (2020a), the concept of social enterprise has been refined over the past decades through relatively intense legislative activities designed to regulate this new type of SEOs.

The scarcity of resources accurately describes the environment in which SEOs evolve. Generally, SEOs face difficulty acquiring the resources they need to start and growth (Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Austin *et al.*, 2006). In social entrepreneurship literature, bricolage appears to be the dominant approach identified for understanding social entrepreneurship behaviors (Servantie and Rispal, 2018). Desa and Basu (2013) and Mair and Marti (2009) suggest that bricolage is appropriate in social entrepreneurship, exploring how this process is developed (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010) and how it helps SEOs to achieve their social mission (Mair and Marti, 2009).

Bricolage in SEOs encompasses a set of actions driven by the pursuit of existing and often scarce resources that can be combined to create innovative and valuable solutions that bring positive social change to markets and communities (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b).

Bricolage in SEOs could define as “the making do” with any resources “at hand” to provide innovative solutions for social needs that traditional organizations fail to address in an adequate way (Janssen *et al.*, 2018; Desa and Basu, 2013; Mair and Marti, 2009; Baker and Nelson, 2005; Levi-Strauss, 1966).

Indeed, within constrained environments, SEOs may engage in bricolage as a means to discover new and novel ways of solving social problems and meeting needs; access human and financial capital to implement the selected ideas; and remedy any strategic weaknesses that obstruct their pursuit of desired social improvements (Anthony *et al.*, 2008).

Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) extended the constructs of bricolage to define social bricolage as a set of six processes. In addition to the traditional constructs of making do, refusal to be constrained by limitation, and improvisation, they identified three further processes in social entrepreneurship context, namely:

1. social value creation, with skills development, social capital and community cohesion;
2. stakeholder participation, with governance structures and engagement in respond to social needs; and
3. persuasion, which describes the process of persuading other actors to leverage acquisition of new resources and support.

These further processes are closely related to the main dimensions of SEOs analysis. The conceptual framework of social bricolage in the context of SEOs combine to form a contextualized set of social action capabilities that can be leveraged by social entrepreneurs in their effort to create social value.

In these assumptions, the concept of social bricolage is an entrepreneurial opportunity to address emergent social needs, in contexts characterized by scarcity of resource, high levels of uncertainty in economic environments and the seasonality of activities (Langevang *et al.*, 2012), such as that one of minor and abandoned cultural heritage.

However, social bricolage is a suitable solution when adaptability, improvisation and resilience are more important than structural efficiency (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010). We stress the importance of the social bricolage processes because relational capacity, network implementation, spontaneous cooperative activities are the main features of the minor cultural heritage field where operating cultural SEOs.

Recent scholars argue that the use of bricolage can affect the diffusion of social innovation (Phills *et al.*, 2008; Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; Desa, 2012; Desa and Basu, 2013; Portales, 2019). In this sense, it is possible to highlight that the SEOs' use of social bricolage impact on their ability to produce social innovation.

These studies include the social processes of innovation itself, particularly those innovations that have a social purpose. It focuses on the process dimension of innovation, on how innovation and change take place, on how they are adopted and spread and how they can be scaled-up, to address social problems. The social entrepreneurship perspective focuses on understanding the characteristics of individuals that create new solutions to solve social problems (or needs) and create social value.

Therefore, SEOs are seen as agents of social innovation in the society "who help find solutions to social challenges, through creative and innovative products and ideas" (Waasdorp and Ruijter, 2011, p. 72).

Gundry *et al.* (2011a, 2011b) analyze the impact of social entrepreneurs' use of social bricolage on their ability to develop social innovation. SEOs are constrained to combine existing and limited resources in a creative way to tackle social problems. In this perspective, bricolage allows developing novel approaches to attract and use relevant resources, identify markets in need and offer adapted products and services. In this way, the ability of the social entrepreneurs to provide social innovative solutions directly depends on the extent to which they use bricolage.

According to Zollo *et al.* (2018), recent scholars argue that entrepreneurial bricolage may be interpreted as the way modern entrepreneurs "catalyse" social innovation by effectively

combining available resources in an ingenious fashion and entering new markets that are ignored by their competitors and seizing the latent profitable and attractive opportunities (Desa and Basu, 2013; Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Kickul *et al.*, 2018). In this sense, Zollo *et al.* (2018) assess that the “ephemeral social entrepreneurship bricolage strategies” emerge when SEOs look for sustainable solutions to emergent social problems (Johannisson and Olaison, 2007; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Desa, 2012) and resources mobilization (Bacq *et al.*, 2015).

2.2 Business model innovation for social entrepreneurship organizations

SEOs must constantly cope with resource-constrained environment and to persist in designing sustainable business models to overcome these constrains (Linna, 2013).

SEOs pursue an innovation process of their business model to create a greater social value while achieving economic sustainability. This process requires SEOs to develop new knowledge resources.

Several scholars have explored the business model innovation concept (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Yunus *et al.*, 2010), to overcome limitations of the traditional frameworks in analyzing new forms of business where the social component is relevant. SEOs, as entrepreneurship organizations, need to define the three main elements of their business model (Zott and Amit, 2008; Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010):

1. their value proposition that describe the value the company creates for its customers and partners;
2. their value architecture that explains how they create and deliver products or services, and thus, how the value is generated; and
3. their sustainable revenue model.

The SEOs value proposition is typically linked to address the core of a social need to creating a systemic change and providing a sustainable support (Seelos and Mair, 2007).

The SEOs value architecture often engages customers/beneficiaries and partners in the creation of products or services. SEOs build these relationships on shared objectives arising a bond of trust. This can serve two purposes. First, it is an innovative resource mobilization strategy that overcome restrictions caused by resource limitations. Second, the stakeholder participation is based on empowerment and co-creation process and develop a sense of responsibility, belonging and identity in the involved resources. Moreover, the involvement of the stakeholders can be a precondition to the sustainability of the value proposition.

The SEOs revenue model try to generate profit to self-sustainability. Maximizing profits is not a priority, financial surpluses are reinvested in the business. They are funded by different sources but usually prefer earned income strategies to reduce dependency of outside funding. Because increasing social value is at the core of SEOs business model, they use price differentiation and cross-subsidization to provide access to customers who could otherwise not pay for the product or service offered.

Nowadays, an increasing number of creative, cultural and arts organizations are recognizing the importance to better understand manage and change their business model in order to make their value creation capacity more sustainable and impactful. The relevance of understanding and managing business models is recognized as one of the main challenges facing creative, cultural and arts organizations. (Schiuma and Lerro, 2017, p. 6)

All these core features described identify the SEOs business model as a social business model. Social business model is useful to organizations that aim to solve social problems by using business methods. These business activities should be undertaken in a way that is

self-sustaining, and if some surplus is generated, it should be used to improve the level of attainment of social goals (Yunus *et al.*, 2010).

In past years, several studies have offered various perspectives of the social business model concept, highlighting different components (Martin and Osberg, 2007; Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Michelini and Fiorentino, 2012; Michelini, 2012).

Austin *et al.* (2006) showed the social value proposition as a core concept that enables the exploration of the differences and similarities between traditional and social ventures. The social value proposition focuses on the opportunity “to create social value by stimulating social change or meeting social needs” (Mair and Marti, 2006, p. 37).

Martin and Osberg (2007) stated that the critical distinction between entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship lies in the value proposition itself.

Yunus *et al.* (2010) have identified four components of social business model: value proposition (stakeholders and product/service); social profit equation (social profit and environmental profit); value constellation (internal value chain and external value chain) and economic profit equation (sales revenues, cost structure and startup capital or employed). These social businesses are used by entrepreneurs sharing a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, innovation and drive.

Michelini (2012) has developed the social value equation that describes the process by which the business could generate a social benefit.

Therefore, drawing on these and others explanations of the social business model framework provided by literature (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Michelini and Fiorentino, 2012; Michelini, 2012; Cicellin *et al.*, 2019), we use four main identification criteria to inform our analysis:

1. social value proposition (i.e. the benefits offered by the business model through products and/or services);
2. social value equation (i.e. the way the business model generates social benefit, in terms of risks and benefits);
3. social profit equation (i.e. how the business model manages the revenue surplus, whether to reinvest or distribute dividends); and
4. startup capital (i.e. the way in which the venture is funded, including through venture capital or startup capital, and the nature of the entrepreneurship).

Through our empirical analysis, we will suggest that the combination of the two approaches: social bricolage and social business model innovation, extends and enriches the concept of social bricolage in SEOs for developing social innovation.

3. Research design

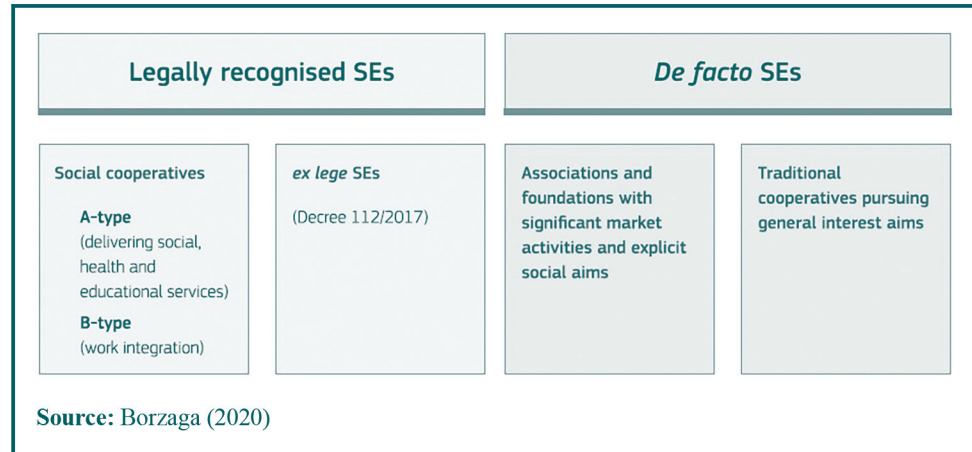
3.1 Research setting: the Italian minor cultural heritage context

A great part of the enormous and heterogeneous Italian cultural heritage lacks enhancement processes. The inadequacy of the public model and the nonprofitability of the private one in the management and protection of the minor cultural heritage has triggered many organizations trying to defend and manage this heritage against from neglect and make it usable and accessible.

Despite the crisis of both public and private profit-driven models, in the past years, new and hybrid initiatives arose, and new projects are designed to meet this social need, drawing on the domain of social entrepreneurship.

The spectrum of social entrepreneurship in Italy includes both legally recognized and *de facto* social enterprises, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Spectrum of social enterprise in Italy



The societal challenge of the SEOs in the minor cultural heritage field lies in proactive social change processes activated by many and different social innovators, public actors, religious institutions, private organizations and public-private partnerships, citizens that shift from clients to key players resulting in new forms of bottom participation, community relations and work (Consiglio and Riitano, 2015). In this domain, SEOs are able to respond to the social need for a broader cultural heritage consumption, to make abandoned sites available to citizens and tourists, filling a welfare gap (Pol and Ville, 2009; Murray *et al.*, 2010; Caulier-Grice *et al.*, 2012).

In particular, in the past ten years in the South of Italy a flourishing of organizations have launched social innovation projects applied to the management of minor and abandoned cultural heritage (Consiglio and Riitano, 2015).

For our analysis, in this paper, we selected a deliberately restricted field of observation on the South of Italy, with the aim of analyzing best practices of a part of the world we belong to, not only from a geographical point of view but also from a political, human, cultural ones.

3.2 Methodology

Our empirical analysis aimed to investigate the innovative social business models and the strategies of social bricolage of cultural SEOs for social innovation production.

This analysis is part of a wider research project targeting SEOs and third sector in different industries in the South of Italy and their ability to develop social innovation.

This emerging field of research lacks an adequate theoretical basis, so we chose a qualitative method based on an inductive and interpretative research approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). We chose a comparative case study method to provide a structured approach through an in-depth study of a limited number of cases. We believe that this is a valid way to show events surrounding the emergence of the businesses under scrutiny, their intended scope and the motivation of their founders. This approach of explicit comparison enabled us to go beyond the specificities of a single case to identify similarities, commonalities and differences through careful abstraction (Yin, 2003, 2014), providing a coherent and integrated framework to answer our research questions.

We considered cultural SEOs that have taken one or more sites of historical, cultural and archeological landscape interest and that:

- manage the cultural sites (e.g. churches, catacombs, historical buildings, villages, marine protected areas, gardens, and more, publicly, privately, ecclesiastical or

public–private partnerships owned) previously in a state of neglect and decay, through activities of recovery, promotion and enhancement by the community;

- guarantee public use; and
- have defined a sustainable business and organizational model, going beyond the only voluntarism.

Special attention has been given to topics such as community engagement, stakeholder participation, and maintaining external legitimacy, all within the particularly resource-constrained area of cultural SEOs (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b).

Table 1 provides a summary description of the 15 cultural SEOs from which we gathered data from informants. The organizations were selected to represent different geographical locations within the South of Italy (Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Sicilia Regions) and a range of different activities in the cultural domain. The cases include SEOs both in urban and rural locations.

We believe that this is a valid way to show events surrounding the emergence of the businesses under scrutiny, their intended scope and the motivation of their founders. This approach of explicit comparison enabled us to go beyond the specificities of a single case in order to identify similarities, commonalities and differences through careful abstraction (Yin, 2014), providing a coherent and integrated framework to answer our research questions.

The cases were purposefully selected in virtue of being information rich, revelatory and unique (Stake, 1995). We recall that generalizations in qualitative comparison are of a theoretical rather than a numerical kind (Palmberger and Gingrich, 2014).

Drawing on the bricolage framework (Johannisson and Olaison, 2007; Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Mair *et al.*, 2012), we use their main identification criteria to inform our analysis and to select the cases, that are:

- making do;
- refusal to enact limitations; and
- improvisation;

and then with the further criteria supported by the construct of social bricolage and empirically identified by Di Domenico *et al.* (2010):

- social value creation;
- stakeholder participation; and
- persuasion.

To collect the cases, we proceeded in stages. First, we started with initial desk analysis to obtain an overview of the cultural SEOs in the Italian context. We mapped all the Italian cultural SEOs that meet the first three criteria above mentioned, and then, we focus on those located in the Regions of the Southern Italy. This first sample of SEOs was used to identify common behavior patterns, similarities and differences in the stories, in the organizational and the decision-making processes.

Secondly, we examined the organizations focusing on their social outcome, using the four criteria explained above of the social business model and the processes of bricolage and social bricolage. This allowed us to identify organizations that both maximize profit and respond to the unmet social need for cultural fruition.

Thirdly, we selected 15 suitable cases also based on their willingness to participate and to be involved in our research. We therefore concentrated on these 15 cases and on the related interviews with informants because we found them both interesting and rich with reference to their activities and the ability to innovate the business model.

Table 1 Main characteristics of selected cases

<i>Cases</i>	<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Legal form</i>	<i>Type of cultural site</i>	<i>Business orientation</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Startup capital</i>	<i>Life cycle phase</i>	<i>Principal activities</i>
#1	2006	Social cooperative A)	Religious buildings	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Private grant	Consolidation	Cultural, commercial and performing arts
#2	2012	Foundation	Ancient village	Not for profit	Public	Public grant	Consolidation	Cultural and performing arts
#3	2009	Association	Churches	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Own capital	Growing	Cultural, touristic and social
#4	2017	Social cooperative A)	Archaeological sites	Not for profit	Public	Own capital	Growing	Cultural, touristic and commercial
#5	2008	Association	Historical building	Not for profit	Private	Own capital	Consolidation	Co-working incubators and music events
#6	2005	Foundation	Woollen mill	Not for profit	PPPs	Public capital	Growing	Co-working incubators, cultural, and healthcare services
#7	2013	Foundation	Archaeological sites	Not for profit	Public	Private capital by venture capitalist	Consolidation	Cultural and social
#8	2009	Social cooperative A)	Churches and catacombs	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Private capital by venture capitalist	Consolidation	Cultural, touristic and social
#9	2010	Association	Protected sea area	Not for profit	Public	Own capital	Consolidation	Research study, protection and enhancement
#10	2012	Foundation	Religious buildings	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Own capital	Growing	Cultural and social
#11	2005	Foundation	Ancient village	Not for profit	Public	Own capital	Consolidation	Co-working incubators, cultural and performing arts
#12	2012	Social cooperative A)	Underground cave	Not for profit	Public	Private grant	Growing	Cultural and touristic
#13	2003	Association	Eco-Museum	Not for profit	Private	Private grant	Consolidation	Cultural, performing arts and social activities
#14	2013	Social cooperative A)	Archaeological sites	Not for profit	Public	Public grant	Growing	Research study, protection and enhancement
#15	2010	Association	Churches and historical buildings	Not for profit	PPPs	Own capital	Consolidation	Cultural and social

Source: Authors' elaboration

The cases were purposefully selected in virtue of being information rich, revelatory and unique (Stake, 1995). We recall that generalizations in qualitative comparison are of a theoretical rather than a numerical kind (Palmerberg and Gingrich, 2014).

Our aim in presenting our cases was to show how cultural SEOs situated within environments that are *de facto* resource poor justifies an investigation of social entrepreneurial actions organized to counter these constraints and to produce social innovation. Moreover, through our case study analysis, we want to suggest that the strategies of social bricolage enable SEOs to create, extend and strengthen social innovation. This can be traced in the adoption of specific innovative business models creating social and economic value.

3.3 Data collection and procedures

We analyzed empirical material collected, to identify actual experiences in the SEOs in the cultural domain. Data collection used two main methods, all consistent with the theoretical framework:

1. document analysis; and
2. semi-structured interviews.

Triangulation allowed us to ensure case studies validity. Normally, data collection methods are triangulated (many methods are combined), but in addition to this, investigators were also triangulated (Denzin, 1978). Issues emerged from the data rather than the data being fitted to predetermined categories. Fieldwork was carried out between January and April 2021.

3.3.1 Document analysis. To better contextualize raw data emerging from the field, we collected and reviewed information from a series of supplementary sources, including organizational charts and further structural elements (in particular, workforce breakdown), annual reports, partnerships, budgets, business plan, social responsibility statements, newsletters, internal communications shared by the organizations, emails, archival material, press review, websites and social networks.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews. We carried out in-depth interviews with informants from each social enterprise. Hence, we focused on well-connected and informed respondents, to get an in-depth understanding of a specific and new phenomenon. The first interview at each organization was with either the Founder, the President, the CEO or the senior manager, and this was followed by further interviews with other informants identified as important by the first interviewee, such as founding members. This approach gave us the access to multiple individuals from each SEO.

In addition to the interviews through skype calls, site visits and observations have been used to add depth to the case studies. Each interview lasted between 90 and 180 min. Interviews were based on an open, wide-ranging, protocol (Holloway, 2005), shared one week in advance and were guided through a semi-structured questionnaire, including questions about the startup initiative; social innovation projects, public and private partners and actors involved and partnerships activated; business model; recruitment and selection of staff, training and assessment processes; and impact on the local community, possible venture capitalist, donations, call for bids. The protocol aimed to stimulate interviewees' interest in this participative research process, which is crucial when collecting data in this way. At the end of each interview, the authors met to listen and discuss what had emerged. Moreover, the authors compared notes and interviews' records with the internal documentations previously analyzed. All the interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim, to focus on statements underlining the social dimension, the social innovation produced. Then, we linked issues and features emerged to the main elements of social innovation from the literature, the framework of social bricolage and social business model (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012; Hoogendoorn *et al.*, 2010; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010).

To respect the anonymity of our interviewees, their names and those of the SEOs have been allocated a code (as expressed in [Table 1](#)).

4. Discussion and conclusion

We present first insights from the empirical research to propose an integrated conceptual framework that combine the social dimensions that can be leveraged by cultural SEOs to create social innovation.

We analyze how the concept of social bricolage can be considered in relation to the innovation of SEOs business model. We have followed and compared 15 cases, all involving variations on the same theme: SEOs' social bricolage and their innovative business model able to highlight the social dimension and to produce social innovation in minor cultural heritage.

The cases that illustrate the strategies of business model innovation with a marked social dimension, develop an understanding of the link between social bricolage and social business model.

In our cases, social bricolage represents the constitutive approach that allows SEO to develop innovative business model's strategies to enhance minor and/or abandoned cultural heritage

Therefore, the relation between social bricolage dimensions and social business model criteria in cultural SEOs produces outcomes in which social innovation can be expressed.

Our cases first provide for insights on new business models in minor cultural heritage management that arise to overcome the inefficiency of traditional management models and respond to a social need.

Second, in examining the social components of using bricolage in social entrepreneurship, we shed light on a partly jagged topic and aimed to extend and enrich literature on the theme, capturing its ability to be a model that respond to the minor cultural heritage issue and produce social innovation.

Our research empirically fills the gap between social bricolage and business model innovation in cultural SEOs and offers a conceptualization of the social dimensions that inform the arising of new and hybrid business model in minor cultural heritage management to support the production of social innovation.

Our study contributes to the academic debate in two distinctive ways.

This paper contributes to the stream of literature on social bricolage and social entrepreneurship. Our study extends the concept of social bricolage in two directions.

First, we explore bricolage phenomenon in a contextualized setting, focusing on SEOs located in Italy and embedded in the cultural field, specifically in minor cultural heritage.

Second, we broaden the existing conceptualization on social bricolage by using the social business model framework. A crucial tenet of our reasoning is that the minor cultural heritage consumption need is hard to meet through traditional business model, which are threatened by socio-economic crises and the related public spending cuts and the failure of traditional models public, private, philanthropic ([Consiglio and Riitano, 2015](#)).

Our paper offers a conceptualization of the social components of developing a new business model in minor cultural heritage management for the creation of social innovation. This study aims to be a benchmark of the social innovation initiatives in the field of minor cultural heritage management. Furthermore, it will help cultural organizations to rethink their strategies according to skills development to respond to the challenges of social change. From a managerial point of view, the main implication of our work resides in the offering new directions for integrating existing business models by incorporating the "social" dimension.

At the end of this first stage of the research study, we can highlight some aspects.

Until recent years, the *leitmotif* in cultural domain was that if there already was a steady economic growth, then extra resources could be invested in the management of cultural heritage. In other words, culture was regarded as something subsidiary in the Italian economy. Nowadays, culture management is a powerful engine of change for the regeneration of social environments and plays a crucial role in activating economic processes capable of positively impacting on communities (culture that changes the context). Moreover, as a result of social context and economic changes occurring, culture is often itself an object of change (culture that changes itself).

The analysis and the comparison of our cases revealed that the investment in the management of cultural heritage has social returns that strongly contribute to the economic growth of our country and to the production of work. Our cases were often developing increasingly significant entrepreneurial activities thanks to their ability to enhance spaces, places and relations.

Social relationship and collaborative participation are main strategies for cultural SEOs. SEOs place the fulfillment of the needs of minor and abandoned cultural heritage at the heart of their value propositions and are able to involve members of the local community in their decision-making processes and governance (Lerro *et al.*, 2016).

Cultural SEOs adopt the business model innovation typical of emerging economies, based on collaboration and welfare. They become “community enterprises” strongly rooted in their local area and focused on a cohesive economy.

The SEOs adopting innovative social business models represent an important prerequisite for the development of areas such as those of Southern Italy, which although not belonging to BOP or developing markets, offer important implications from a social point of view. Cultural SEOs in the South of Italy are activator of innovative social and organizational responses, which leverage proximity to communities and territories. Although our cases still are limited and circumscribed and reasoning in an overall approach, they emerge as powerful examples of widespread social entrepreneurship with a significant public function, that generate social innovation.

We highlighted these organizations’ ability to provide effective business models and respond to the minor cultural heritage issue in Italy and Europe.

This study will help cultural organizations to rethink their strategies in line with skills development, and respond to the challenges of economic and social change. The main implication is in offering new options for incorporating the social dimension into existing business models.

In conclusion, the Italian third sector is taking steps to fill the gap left by the inefficiencies of state and private actors. It needs clear incentives and rules to operate and survive. It is not possible to wait for socio-economic growth in a territory before investing in cultural and social sectors. Instead, the cultural and social development of a community may be the start of self-sustainable and effective social innovation processes.

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Further reading

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