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ON EMERGING CIVIC SPACES' ROLE IN INNOVATIVE LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, RIACE AS A CASE

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TITLE	ABSTRACT	BACKGROUND	MOTIVATION	METHODOLOGY	CASE-STUDIES	RESULTS	CONCLUSIONS	FUTURE WORK
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ABSTRACT

There seems to be a **political inaction and stagnating local socio-economic development** (LSED) in rural and peri-urban areas of Calabria Region in southern Italy. In response, this paper, based on literature review and case study, seeks to cast light on an **innovative LSED pattern driven by emerging civic spaces**. To this end, this paper carries out a **case study of Riace** so as to **explore the dynamics, forms and socio-economic impacts of emerging civic spaces in relation to innovative LSED**.

By analysing the quantitative data collected from Istat and qualitative data collected from field studies and interviews of key stakeholders, it looks into the emerging multicultural civic spaces in Riace, focusing on their impacts on socio-economic innovation.

Finally, based on the case study, the paper points out the **viability of adopting a place-based and community-driven approach to LSED**. It concludes that civic spaces, formed through the empowerment of local population and community collaboration, **stimulates socio-cultural and economic innovation**, which serves as a driver of LSED.

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BACKGROUND

- Political inaction and stagnating local socio-economic development (LSED) in rural and peri-urban areas of Calabria Region;
- Civic spaces emerge as a response to globally-linked economic growth and access to information (Daniere, 2003);
- The literature available does not overtly touch upon the relationship between civic spaces and LSED. Besides, their socio-cultural and economic impacts are barely discussed;
- In Riace, emerging civic spaces are more of a response to unfavourable external political-economic environment and resulting endogenous place-based local socio-economic development (LSED) led by the civil society.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore an innovative LSED pattern driven by emerging civic spaces;
- Explore the dynamics, forms and socio-economic impacts of emerging civic spaces in relation to innovative LSED.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How do emerging civic spaces contribute to innovative LSED?
- 2) Do civic spaces also represent the role of the non-citizens, namely, immigrants?

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- **Literature Review + Case Study;**
- **Quantitative + Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis;**

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Data

- Secondary baseline data of 1991, 2001 and 2011 from Istat, especially those on demography and economic performance;

Qualitative Data

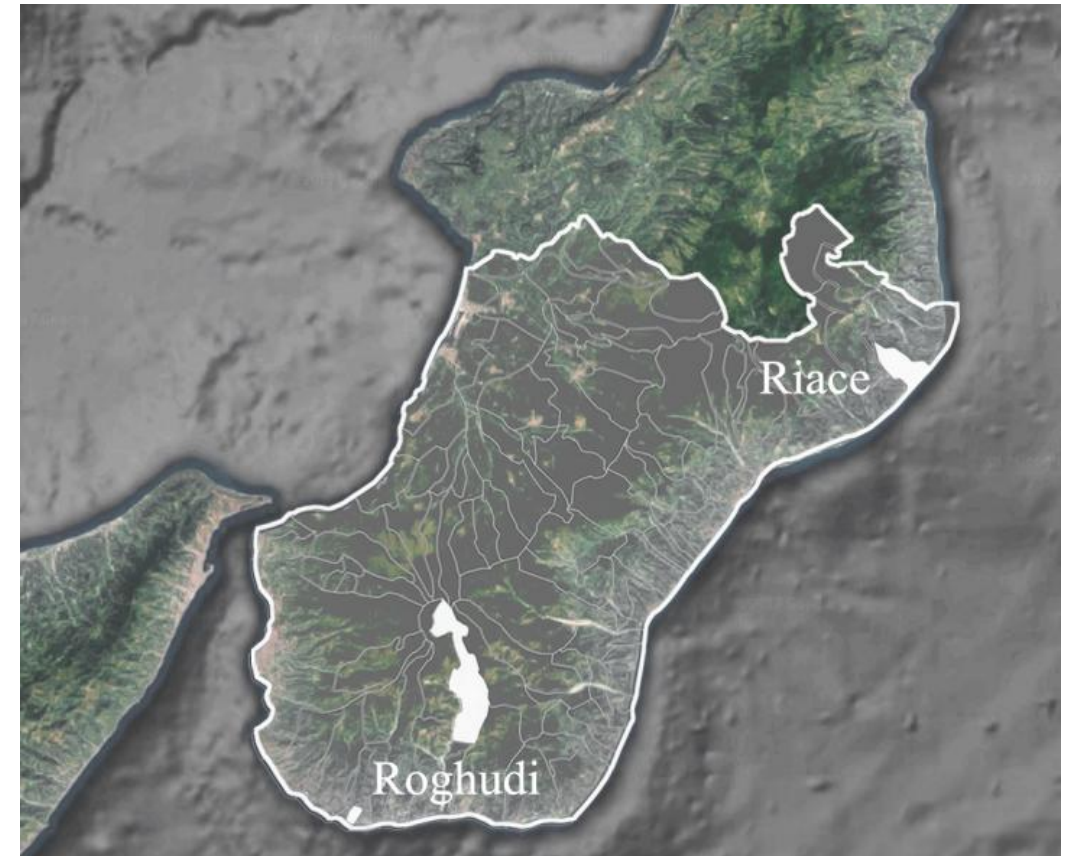
- Field studies and interviews of key stakeholders.

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Riace and Roghudi

- Minor historic centres (MHCs) of Greek origins, well-known for their strong territorial identity and rich cultural and landscape heritage;
- Isolated from the urban basin;
- Delicate socio-economic conditions due to aging population accompanied by outbound migration and low birth rate, changes in productive patterns, natural disasters, and demographic concentration in new settlements of the towns along the coast;
- Riace is one of the MHCs.

CASE STUDY



Geographic location of Roghudi and Riace

Source: Google Map (2017)

Processed by A. Errigo

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DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR (Population, old age index, young household with children rate and potential vacancy of buildings)

- An increasing population and young household with children rate as well as a decreasing old age index in 2011;
- Significant decrease in potential vacancy of building implies an increase of immigrants;

RESULTS

- Inverse demographic changes have been happening since 2001;
- 2001 was considered as a baseline year to catch the trend before and after with the emergence of civic spaces.

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Emerging Civic Spaces in Riace

- Mainly represented and fostered by autonomous NGOs under the coordination of the institutional leadership, namely, the mayor;
- NGOs have started to emerge and play an active role in Riace since 1999;
- Collaboration between the host community and the guest community.

Multicultural Community Building and Social Inclusion

- Drastically increasing number of immigrants proves to be both an opportunity and a risk;
- How to foster a multicultural community that is socially and economically inclusive to all community members is undoubtedly an important but challenging task for Riace;
- Grass-roots NGOs have played a significant role in promoting integration and inclusion of the immigrants, while building up the towns' social capital;
- The autonomy in planning and implementing cultural initiatives aimed at the integration of immigrants.
- **Città Futura (NGO)** Founded in 1999; Directed by the Mayor Domenico Lucano;
- Dedicated to promoting the integration of immigrants in **four** ways.

RESULTS

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1. HOUSING PROVISION

Global Village project (Villaggio Globale) - **the key to foster civic spaces**

- More than 20 abandoned houses were reclaimed, generating a total of more than 100 beds;
- Successfully combined the need of social integration and urban regeneration innovative project: not only aimed at improving housing for immigrants, but also creating new jobs;
- Mixed use: besides housing, bars, taverns, shops, etc;
- The businesses created have contributed to regenerate and revitalise the historic centre, stimulate the local economic activities and allow immigrants to learn local skills necessary for making a living.

RESULTS

2. CONSCIOUS URBAN DESIGN

- The need to promote social inclusion of immigrants in public spaces;
- Public designs that convey the value of tolerance and cultural diversity.



Public board showing nationalities present in Riace

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"Welcome to Riace", signs of welcome on the gate of Riace

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Mural painting and "Global Village", entrance arch to the shops

© A. Errigo (2017)

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3. AMENITIES IMPROVEMENT

- The provision of various public amenities such as theatre, where performances and citizen meetings take place, and oil mill with stone grinders for the production of extra virgin olive oil



Theatre of Riace
© A. Errigo (2017)



Oil mill with stone grinders for the production of extra virgin olive oil
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RESULTS

4. PUBLIC SPACE DIVERSIFICATION

- To make sure that different ethnic groups can **interact and socialise** with each other some of the existing squares in the historic centre were rehabilitated with considerations of social integration promotion



A small square in the historic centre transformed into a stage decorated with multi-ethnic paintings
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COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

RESULTS

- In Riace local NGOs have helped build up the community's social capital by promoting integration and socio-cultural inclusion which serves as a premise for intercommunity collaboration;
- Besides socio-cultural inclusion, economic inclusion is also achieved, since new jobs, especially jobs for immigrants, are created;
- Riace has freed itself from an over-dependency on traditional agricultural economy and moved towards new economic sectors;
- By adding value to the Heritage, both material and immaterial, the host community; and guest community collaborate to help promote tourism development and LSED;
- 2 Collaboration forms: **ARTISTIC LABORATORIES** and **AGRICULTURAL REVITALISATION**

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ARTISTIC LABORATORIES

- Where immigrants can work as apprentices to learn handicrafts;
- Community collaboration only added value to local Heritage and promoted the territorial identity, but also generated income for both the host community and guest community;
- Handicrafts for tourism development.



Immigrant weaving in a laboratory
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Boutique selling local handicrafts while promoting fair trade concept
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RESULTS

AGRICULTURAL REVITALISATION

- The host community and the guest community collaborate, under the guidance of Città Futura, to revitalise agricultural production by reclaiming abandoned farming lands
- “Didactic Farm” dedicated to immigrants that allows immigrants to take advantage of the tools and facilities needed for agricultural work



Panoramic view on the “Didactic Farm”
© A. Errigo (2017)

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- The emerging civic spaces in Riace are mainly **represented and fostered by autonomous NGOs** (under the coordination of the institutional leadership, namely, the mayor) and **collaboration between the host community and the guest community**;
- The emerging civic spaces do **contribute to the integration of immigrants**, and at the same time, **the promotion of an innovative local socio-economic development**;
- Emerging civic spaces have helped rejuvenate the population of Riace and regenerate the town;
- The LSED in Riace **proves to be innovative** because:

1. Local NGOs, Città Futura in particular, play a proactive role in **promoting social and economic inclusion** by building up a cohesive multicultural community;
2. According to the needs of all community members, the historic centre of Riace **has been regenerated and revitalised** by mobilising the idle physical capital;
3. **Intercommunity collaboration** has helped build up Riace’s social capital which is vital for its emerging civic spaces and contributed to its LSED.

CONCLUSIONS

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Due to space limitation, **the research didn't discuss the role of the public sector in fostering the civic spaces**, which is unarguably important in Riace. Future research may well fill this gap. In addition, it would be interesting to **compare Riace to other minor historic centres which see emerging civic spaces as well**.

Finally, as Daniere (2003: 4) points out, that civic spaces “require rules of access and use if they are to function in an inclusive, fundamentally non-violent and civil manner”, one more question for future research is, **how should these civic spaces be properly managed and regulated?**

FUTURE WORK

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

If you have any question about the paper, please do not hesitate to contact the authors:

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