

## SOCIAL COOPERATIVE GRUPPO 78



### Executive Summary

The social cooperative Gruppo 78 (active in the Trentino region for 30 years) operates within the field of assistance for people affected by psychological/social disorders, providing social/health assistance and educational services, through residential, semi-residential, and diurnal facilities.

Among the cooperative's services, Mas del Gnac is of particular interest, an apartment block in the village of Isera,. Started in the 90s, the project aimed at creating an activity able to reintegrate people who are marginalized and otherwise excluded from the workforce by creating and reinforcing basic skills.

Mas del Gnac is divided into a *laboratorio occupazionale* (occupational laboratory), *centro diurno per l'acquisizione dei prerequisiti lavorativi* (Centre for the acquisition of work-related prerequisites) and *socializzazione al lavoro* (socialisation for working).

The cultivation of the lands surrounding Mas del Gnac provides most of the raw materials which are then transformed in the laboratory. Starting from fruits and vegetables (grown according to ORGANIC FARMING principles), the laboratory produces compotes, juices, syrups, as well as tomato puree and Trentino sauerkrauts, which are then sold on the market.

People with mental disorders are involved in different occupational laboratories according to their competences and skills.

Over the years, the cooperative has managed to understand and adapt to the new emerging needs of society. Gruppo 78 is currently fostering the integration of the Sinti population, and stands out as the main promoter of social co-housing as a method to respond to increasing housing and relational problems.



# Section 1: Description of the case

## 1.1 CONTEXT AND HISTORY

*The 80s and the emergence of new needs*

Italian Social Cooperation has a recent history. It started over the 70s and the 80s, a period in which the society, undergoing considerable cultural changes, welcomed civil rights such as the right to work, the right to family, the right to health and social rights.

It is in this context that Gruppo 78 was created, through the initiative of 10 persons – 6 of whom affected by handicap -, as an association inspired by the model of “Comunità di Capodarco ”which is an ONG set up to respond to problems of the poor and the marginalized, with special attention to the disabled. . Their objective was to promote the re-insertion of people with physical disabilities within the society.

*20 years after its birth, the cooperative evolves in order to respond to the emerging issues of the territory*

Over the years, the group developed and changed: it changed its juridic form from association to A-type cooperative; it adjusted to the societal changes trying to answer to different types of disability and offering new opportunities – also work-related – to weaker and marginalised people.

Today, as yesterday, the cooperative is very attentive in listening to society and to disadvantaged people, emerging as a community social enterprise.

The cooperative's ability to listen to the community enabled Gruppo 78 to respond to emerging needs, e.g. the issue of sharing accommodation as a method to face economic, social and health problems. Another need the cooperative adapted to related to the presence of migrants on the territory, in particular the Sinti population.

## 1.2. LIFECYCLE

### **i) Conditions which allowed start up and founding as well as implementation**

At the end of the 70s the need and the desire to facilitate the re-insertion process of people with physical disabilities within the society, led to the creation of an association inspired by “Comunità di Capodarco ”. It was created by a group of ten people, six of whom affected by disability.

**ii) organisational design—why was the legal form chosen, why were certain governance models chosen, stakeholders, etc.:**

The first organizational approach was built on the values of sharing, self-management, and self-financing, the latter being achieved independently until 1984. The financing was raised partially through the sale of their paintings and craftwork and partially through public subsidies for disabled people, jointly stored in a common treasury.

At a later stage it became social cooperative .

**iii) growth and expansion of the SE, focusing on the various resources (finance, voluntary, etc.) mobilized at each stage;**

In 1981, due to the need of having a juridical form in order to guarantee the possibility of working for all the people involved in the association, including the disabled people, and also to safeguard the mutual nature and shared management, they adopted the form of social cooperative type A. called “Cooperativa Gruppo 78”, increasing their areas of intervention and new working activities. It is in these years that new needs emerged, confirmed by the requests of intervention from the social services of the territory. New weak segments of the population emerged alongside people with physical disabilities: prisoners, drug addicts, and people with other problems and mental disorders. Gruppo 78 therefore decided to focus its action mainly in the field of mental health (considering also the promulgation of the Basaglia Law 180)<sup>1</sup>.

This period saw the beginning of **agreements with the local public authority** and relations with the new born Consortium of the Trentino social cooperation Con.Solida<sup>2</sup>, which grouped together almost all the social cooperatives arising in those years.

**In 1991, Gruppo 78 decided to operate as a type A<sup>3</sup> solidarity cooperative.**

Driven by the constant desire to respond to the new needs of the territory, via networking with public services, the reality of the private social sphere, associations and the civil society, Gruppo 78 progressively defined itself within a dimension of a “community social enterprise.

**iv) any crisis (small or large) moments along the way? or moments that were not a crisis but required some changes? How were these resolved/addressed?**

So far, there have not been particular difficulties other than having to face a continued growth of interest and activity in response to the needs and demands of the local social services, due to the inclusion not only of the disabled, but also

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1 One of the most famous laws of the Italian judicial system, through which the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia introduced a new way of facing issues linked to psychiatric and social difficulties and decreed the closure of mental institutions.

2 For more details, see Glossary.

3 For the distinction between social cooperative of type A and B see Glossary.

an increase in the emarginated categories (reaching out to the increasingly weaker components of society, such as prisoners, young offenders and drug addicts, people with mental disorders, and those at risk of deviancy). This has led to not only an increase in the services offered and provided, but also to an increased need for training and greater economic stability. The increased amount of work arriving from the public sector has more recently run into problems due to cutbacks and consequent reduced funds.

At present day, the cooperative is going through a transition "generational" stage. After many years since its founding, there is now a process of "reorganization", in terms of roles, historical figures, among whom the founding members. So there is increasing need to invest in motivating the younger generations, mainly by way of training to continue the activity and strengthen the cooperative identity and reinforce the sense of belonging of the younger members.

### 1.3 CORE BUSINESS MODEL

Gruppo 78 mainly operates within three fields:

**1. MENTAL HEALTH:** management of protected and semi-protected apartments; day centre for adults, employment laboratories and laboratories for the development of work-related prerequisites; domestic education interventions; informative paths of socialization within work contexts.

**2. ADULT SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES:** management of residential semi-protected services; domestic education interventions; informative paths of socialization within work contexts.

**3. ETHNIC MINORITY INTEGRATION:** the service not only provides for the management of the Sinti Camp, but is also aimed at supporting the Sinti and Rom populations. This is done mainly through interventions meant to improve health conditions and schooling, housing and job opportunities.

In the early 90s, Gruppo 78 began the production and transformation of fruits and vegetables at **MAS DEL GNAC**, a block of flats in the countryside of Isera. The driving force of the project was the desire to create an activity able to reintegrate marginalized people, who were otherwise excluded from the workforce, and therefore to create or reinforce basic skills.



*The sale of  
products on the  
private market*

Mas del Gnac is divided into **LABORATORIO OCCUPAZIONALE**

**(occupational laboratory), CENTRO DIURNO PER L'ACQUISIZIONE DEI PREREQUISITI LAVORATIVI (Centre for the acquisition of work-related prerequisites) and SOCIALIZZAZIONE AL LAVORO (socialisation for work).**

The cultivation of the lands surrounding Mas del Gnac provides most of the raw materials which are then transformed in the laboratory. Starting from fruits and vegetables (grown as ORGANIC FARMING) the laboratory produces compotes, juices, syrups, as well as tomato puree and Trentino sauerkrauts, which are then sold on the local market.



*The Centre for the development of work-related skills*

*Services agreed upon with the public authority<sup>4</sup>*

In addition to the transformation work, people with mental and psychological disorders are involved in **assembling activities** (such as cardboard boxes used for Christmas packaging).

Assembly and printing activities for companies are also at the core of the **CENTRO DI AVVIAMENTO AL LAVORO "TALEA" (Centre for the development of work-related skills)** managed by Gruppo 78 in the city of Trento. Active since 1997, the Talea Centre addresses people with no working autonomy or those excluded from the job market due to psychological issues or social problems. It aims at helping them acquire/re-acquire work-related skills useful for both the protected and non-protected job market. Every person who arrives at the centre receives an individual program and an educator who supports them.

In order to help the weakest segments of the community, Gruppo 78 operates in agreement with the public authority, managing:

**4 APPARTAMENTI SEMIPROTETTI (semi-protected apartments).** The service is addressed to people in need of support belonging to the Vallagarina region with low or recovered autonomy, providing them with the possibility of living in a family environment, whilst having appropriate assistance available for their real needs.

**CENTRO di accoglienza DIURNO PER ADULTI (adult shelter).** Users are involved in activities of day to day home management, similar

<sup>4</sup> For more details on the services managed by the cooperative see Glossary

*New needs, new services*

*The integration of the Sinti population*

to those of a normal family life.

**INTERVENTO EDUCATIVO A DOMICILIO (educational support at home)** for a family unit or individuals. The service consists of a series of interventions aimed at helping the family unit or the individual in stress related situations/ those creating anxiety.

**CENTRO TERAPEUTICO RESIDENZIALE (residential therapy centre)**. This is a health facility whose admission procedure and criteria are under the jurisdiction of the A.P.S.S. (Azienda Provinciale per i Servizi Sanitari), in partnership with the multi-disciplinary team involved in the user's therapy.



**GRUPPO APPARTAMENTO (Apartment Group)**. This is a shelter for both adult men and women suffering psychological disorders. The educator's presence is diurnal, from 8a.m. until 8p.m. The admission procedure is under the jurisdiction of the A.P.S.S. (public

health service) in tight partnership with the multi-disciplinary team, and the families of the users in order to personalize the rehabilitation process and to improve the quality of the daily life of the disabled, with a possible reinsertion in the working environment.

**INTEGRAZIONE DELLA POPOLAZIONE SINTA (Integration of the Sinti population)** managed together with the Municipality of Rovereto since 2011, thanks to a local network headed by social services. The cooperative operates within three fields, namely:

**Promotion of schooling.** Intervention of first socialisation and integration with other children; involvement of parents in order to strengthen the idea that they are giving their children more integration opportunities with their peers; educational support and after-school education, as agreed with social services; vocational guidance.

**Intervention for sharing accommodation in the Area Sosta (Sinti Camp).** Promotion of lifestyles and behaviour respectful of other people, animals and the environment, in order to improve the quality of life and coexistence among Sinti families, as well as with residents of the local territory; collective or individual meetings aimed at identifying complaints about and solutions for living together in the Area Sosta.

*Co-housing*

**Interventions for the improvement of the quality of life.** Promotion of health, alongside a decrease in poverty and marginality, by way of achieving economic independence and more autonomy in relation with local authorities and also within society; promotion of actions aimed at

finding employment, often combined with educational paths to acquire work-related prerequisites.

Gruppo 78 is currently promoting the concept of social housing as a way of joining forces to find new solutions for sharing accommodation and relationship needs.

The cooperative, in partnership with several regional institutions, organizes meetings with different experts on the concept of sharing accommodation, both in theoretical and practical terms. It proposes direct experiences of guests or of Gruppo 78 volunteers, rules and advice for living well together, household notions (shopping, recycling, personal care), active citizenship in order to give back to the user the status of free citizen with collective responsibility, as well as creating good neighbourhood relationships, and information on public and assisted housing.

Gruppo 78 is currently promoting the social co-housing as a method to join forces and find new ways to answer housing and relationship needs.

## 1.4 INSTITUTIONAL/GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The main body of the cooperative is the *Assemblea dei soci* (members' assembly) which elects the *Consiglio di Amministrazione* (the board) and its President (now Santo Boglioni). At present, the administrators hold the task as volunteers and so are not paid any attendance fee.

On December 31st 2014 there were 66 cooperative members.

Since March 2013, the cooperative has been provided with a Family Audit certification. This has been done in order to facilitate the trade-off between private and working life of cooperative employees, and to enforce an already shared culture. For this purpose, Gruppo 78 plans to offer:

- Time off work, beyond that foreseen in the contract
- “Good return” programmes providing support and training after time off work
- Ad hoc flexible schedules where possible
- Internal mobility where possible
- Preparation and publication of informative kits on parenthood and care charge
- Leisure activities
- Promotion of and support for the participation of users' families in the internal

*The Family  
Audit  
Certification*

Auto-Mutuo-Aiuto (mutual self-help) group

•Promotion of and support for the participation in the Auto-Mutuo-Aiuto (mutual self-help) group also for families caring for those with psychological disorders.

## 1.5 EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The relationship with the public authority started in the 80s and strengthened in the course of time, particularly with the A.P.S.S., the Municipality of Rovereto and the Community of Vallagarina. The cooperative also networks with private and tertiary companies. Moreover, Gruppo 78 is part of the Union of Trentino social cooperation Con.Solida which groups together around 60 social cooperatives of the region.

## 1.6 ECONOMIC DATA

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Total</b>	€1.981.314	€2.061.900	€2.098.080	€2.061.038	€1.883.393
<b>Public</b>	92,08% (51% from public contracts)	92% (54% from public contracts)	92% (54% from public contracts)	92,8 (54% from public contracts)	92,6 (49% from public contracts)
<b>Private</b>	7,92%	8%	8%	7,2%	7,4%

## 1.7 POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The areas of action in which social enterprises can operate are defined by article 2 of the 155/2006 legislative decree:

- social assistance
- social/health and care assistance
- training
- education
- environmental protection
- protection of cultural heritage
- university education
- after school education



- responsible tourism
- specific services for social enterprises provided by institutions make up more than 70% social enterprise organisations

Moreover, organisations which, independently from their area of activity, promote initiatives aimed at integrating disabled and disadvantaged people (who must represent at least 30% of the staff) can also become social enterprises. In addition to this, the activity must not have a mutual aim as priority, i.e. it cannot be exclusively addressed to members only.

As long as specific social cooperative cases are concerned (e.g. Gruppo 78), it must be underlined that a new political-economic scenario is currently taking shape. A period in which, in light of reduced public resources and a simultaneous increase in the number of social needs, it is necessary to introduce innovative processes able to enhance the territory's resources and specificities. About 30 years ago social cooperatives organised themselves to face the emerging needs of those times, i.e. physical disability, psychological disorders, social deviance, and drug addiction, which still remain today along with other new emerging needs (youth unemployment, poverty due to the economic crisis, increasing immigration, environmental problems, etc.)

# Section 2: Analysis of the case

## 2.1. IMPACT ANALYSIS

The management of the centres for the job market and for the development of work-related prerequisites aims at the creation of an initial mechanism, through which the users can achieve greater autonomy. Firstly, by incentivizing the users' socialisation, promoting therefore job placement through the leverage of contact “resources” with employers and local economic institutions in local firms and institutions. This positively affects the well-being of users and their families, but also public administration and social-health services indirectly benefit from it, as in this way public administration costs are reduced, alongside limiting the falling back on social and health care services.

The social integration among citizens and between users and their families is promoted thanks to the proximity to the territory, the promotion of social-cultural initiatives addressed to citizens, as well as the participation in working groups and co-design with public services, tertiary sectors and associations. This helps **identify the emerging needs of the community and develop social capital in terms of relationships and connections.**

## 2.2 LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Needing to adjust the internal organisation to respond to a change in external demand, the increasing complexity, the decline in public resources; needing to operate efficiently on the market at all levels and in a coordinated manner; needing to build a strategic plan able to combine the cooperative's values and identity with the necessity of being an enterprise; needing to activate new partnership connections and new modalities of network cooperation on the territory.

### STRENGTHS

Specialization within the field of mental health; qualified and competent staff, voluntary work, formal and informal local networks, deep territorial rooting; good economic-financial situation; ownership of facilities.

### WEAKNESSES

Generational turnover; historical figures no longer have an importance as lever as it is very difficult considering the changes in strategies, scenarios and society; ways of managing informative flow; insufficient professional staff (educators) – which can be both a strong and weak point.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

Possibility to enhance the competences acquired within the social assistance and care field, as well as the historical range of services, also in broader contexts such as health and social agriculture.

### **THREATS**

Their smaller size compared to other cooperatives both in Trentino and not; the dependence on public contracts may contribute to a loss in market share.

### **ADDITIONAL MATERIAL**

None

## GLOSSARY

The types of care and personal services designed and managed in Trentino deserve a detailed explanation, as a simple translation risks not sufficiently doing them justice.

### Services

<b>Appartamento semiprotetto (Semi-protected apartment)</b>	Shelter for small family units with limited capability of autonomous life, or for people with psychological, relational or physical difficulties, who have concluded training to become self-sufficient, but still need to live in places where they can find aid and support. The daily life within the apartment is designed to increase users' self-sufficiency, facilitate their social integration and encourage individual initiatives.
<b>Centro diurno per adulti (Diurnal Centre for Adults)</b>	At the centre, people with difficulties but with their own personal autonomy can carry out working activities such as assembling, learn how to manage their personal hygiene and how to keep the centre clean, alongside learning how to live as part of a group. The service, managed by professional operators and volunteers, is supervised in partnership with the local authorities, aiming to promote social and working integration of the disadvantaged person.
<b>Laboratorio per lo sviluppo di prerequisiti lavorativi (Laboratory for the development of work-related skills)</b>	At the laboratory disadvantaged people attend training in order to acquire behaviours, motivation, responsibilities, and practical/manual skills, all necessary for job placement. Users are integrated into a system which, albeit protected, reproduces the characteristics, the pace, and the rules of the world of work.
<b>Interventi educativi domiciliari (domestic educational interventions)</b>	A set of domestic help interventions in situations considered cause of anxiety for the family unit or for the individual. Together with the educator, the user performs activities both within and outside the family framework, but also tasks aimed at developing or maintaining personal autonomy. All this also has the goal of "relieving" the family or the daily tutor of the disadvantaged person.



**Percorsi di  
socializzazione in  
contesto lavorativo**

**(Socialisation training  
in a working  
framework)**

The service addresses people with particularly serious conditions, who are not able to benefit from other existing services, offering them the possibility to spend part of the day in a company with a challenging and non-regressive working environment. This is an effective tool for job guidance and sometimes for actual employment in a hosting work experience company.

**Gruppo  
Appartamento**

**(Apartment Group)**

Residential facilities which host people who, although completely or partially self-sufficient, need to live 24 hours a day in a protected environment. The aim is to empower these people in order to lead them to an improvement of their social and relational conditions. In the apartment, the guests with the help of expert operators, get used to autonomously manage a daily routine, work and time, as well as the relationships with other people. As time goes by, some people may go to live on their own or in semi-protected apartments.

## Local Institutions

**Cooperative sociali di  
tipo "A" (Social  
Cooperatives of type  
"A")**

Offer educational, recreational, care and assistance services to the community.

**Cooperative sociali di  
tipo "B" (Social  
Cooperatives of type  
"B")**

Create job opportunities for the weak or disadvantaged people, undertaking entrepreneurial activities within different sectors: agricultural, industrial, catering, etc.

**Comunità di Valle**

In the region there are 16 communities (a sort of separate department of the Autonomous Province of Trento) that can manage the majority of social and education services. Instead, health services depend primarily on the province.

**Con.Solida.**

Consortium of Trentino social cooperatives. The largest movement of social enterprises based in Trentino, made up of 60 social cooperatives (40 A type + 20 B type) and of 2 organisations which support development (Promocoop & Cooperfidi). It is part of the Federation of the Trentino Cooperatives and of the Consortium "Gino Mattarelli" (CGM), the national consortium of social cooperatives. Its areas of activity include the development of the community's well-being, of its members and of the cooperation culture, the creation/development of

**A.P.S.S. (Azienda  
Provinciale per i  
Servizi Sanitari)**

social enterprises, the organisation of training courses. Moreover, it provides political representation and facilitates contracting both with public and private organisations.

Trentino public body for health and care services. It is organised in healthcare districts, departments and hospital units.

