Social bricolage and business model innovation: a framework for social entrepreneurship organizations

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Abstract

Purpose – The last two decades have witnessed a surge of interest in social entrepreneurship organizations (SEOs). Understanding their business models is crucial for sustaining their long-term growth. This paper analyses how SEOs that use the approach of social bricolage adapt their business model to develop social innovation.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used in-depth multiple comparative case studies and narrative analysis to focus on the South of Italy, where these ventures play a crucial role in the entrepreneurial process of minor and abandoned cultural heritage sites, generating economic and social value and employment opportunities.

Findings – By developing a conceptual framework, this paper enhances current understanding of the social dimensions of SEOs' business model. These ventures using the approach of social bricolage can produce social innovation, reinventing and innovating their business model. The business model innovation of the cases revealed a strong social mark and identified peculiar strategies that both respond to social needs and long-term sustainability in complex contexts.

Practical implications – This study connects previous knowledge on social bricolage with the business model innovation, highlighting routines and processes used by ventures, and provides a starting point for social entrepreneurs and innovators in the complex and often uncertain cultural domain of the Third Sector in Italy.

Originality/value – The paper aims to contribute to the literature on SEOs by exploring their main features and social dimensions. By combining social bricolage and business model innovation, it offers a novel conceptual framework for developing social innovation and for the study of SEOs.

Keywords Business model innovation, Minor cultural heritage, Social bricolage, Social entrepreneurship organizations, Social innovation

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a sub-field in the entrepreneurship literature that describes organizations and ventures pursuing innovation and aiming to solve diverse social and environmental challenges (Martin and Osberg, 2007; Shaw *et al.*, 2007; Dacin *et al.*, 2011; Mair and Martí, 2006; Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Janssen *et al.*, 2018). Social entrepreneurship involves the pursuit of both economic goals and social and environmental objectives (Dees, 2001; Mair *et al.*, 2012).

Smith and Stevens (2010, p. 575) argue that: "*Social entrepreneurship is a rapidly emerging domain within both the academic and practitioner communities*". As the domain continues to grow, there has been an evolution in SE which sees different actors and new typologies of

ventures arising, including social entrepreneurship organizations (SEOs) (Bacq *et al.*, 2015). This increasing diversity challenges the development of the field of social entrepreneurship as it attempts to define its distinctive domain of academic research and encourages greater precision and conceptual clarity to allow the domain to build a scientific base of knowledge (e.g. Nicholls, 2009).

This results in important insights about the role of SEOs (e.g. Seelos *et al.*, 2011), that have been identified as the form of social entrepreneurship at community level, and an alternative and/or complement to the action of states, governments and private actors to address collaborative actions and unmet and/or poverty-related social needs (Seelos *et al.*, 2011; Abebe *et al.*, 2020).

In the last two decades, several streams of entrepreneurial studies have focused on SEOs. The first stream examines 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).

Morris *et al.* (2021, p. 1100) affirm: "*Where do we find the entrepreneurship is SE? Here, it is our position that is not so much about entity creation, internally derived revenue sources, or reliance on professional management practices. Instead, our concern is the application of the entrepreneurial mindset to all the activities and challenges involved in successfully effecting social change*".

Accordingly, we can certainly state that we find in SEOs this *"entrepreneurial mindset"*, where entrepreneurial is the mindset applicated to all the activities involved in successfully effecting social change, and therefore of the ventures we analysed.

A second stream analyses innovation in hybrid forms of SEOs (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Zollo *et al.*, 2016, 2018). Nicholls (2009) argues that the problem-solving attitude of social entrepreneurs particularly fits with bricolage behaviour. According to Janssen *et al.* (2018), SEOs and bricolage share important characteristics. Bricolage in social entrepreneurship (also called entrepreneurial bricolage, Zollo *et al.*, 2018) allows identification of unserved markets and needs (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, b; Bacq *et al.*, 2015) and it is mainly based on the concept of creating new combinations of resources or inputs in order to take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Ventures can use it to develop new products and approaches, capture new opportunities (Baker and Nelson, 2005), and attract and use relevant resources. Several studies (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, b; Linna, 2013; Desa and Basu, 2013; Desa and Koch, 2014; Bacq *et al.*, 2015) note that the ability of SEOs to develop social innovation depends directly on their bricolage strategies and behaviour.

So far, however, little attention has been paid to business model innovation in SEOs. Only a few studies (Zott and Amit, 2008; Guo *et al.*, 2016; Servantie and Rispal, 2018) analyse the business models that SEOs adopt to combine their economic and social mission (Mair and Martí, 2006; Gundry *et al.*, 2011a; Desa and Basu, 2013; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021). Fewer still examine how social bricolage makes SEOs' business model sustainable, affordable and innovative (Desa and Basu, 2013). These few studies are also mostly focused on bottom-of-the-pyramid markets (Bhattacharyya *et al.*, 2010; Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016; Agarwal *et al.*, 2018), and transitional and developing economies (Guo *et al.*, 2016; Desa and Koch, 2014; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021). This overlooks their role in different socio-cultural contexts and in developed countries such as Italy, where SEOs, especially in recent years and during the COVID-19 pandemic, play a key role in communities and the civil economy. In particular, there are strong and recent calls in the entrepreneurship literature to improve the understanding of the business models that make SEOs able to respond to unsatisfied social needs and to optimize resources (Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Molecke and Pinkse, 2017; Heikkilä *et al.*, 2017; Morris *et al.*, 2021; Ciambotti and Pedrini, 2021).

We aim to fill this gap by drawing on the approach of social bricolage and business model innovation as drivers of social innovation (Bhattacharyya *et al.*, 2010; Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Kickul *et al.*, 2018; Zollo *et al.*, 2018; de Souza Joao-Roland and Granados, 2020; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021). In particular, drawing on the works of Janssen *et al.* (2018), Di Domenico *et al.* (2010), Zollo *et al.* (2018), Heikkilä *et al.* (2017), Gasparin *et al.* (2021) and Do Vale *et al.* (2021), we aim to analyse the specific business model of SEOs that, using the approach of social bricolage, in terms of decision-making processes, organizational and entrepreneurial choices, develop social innovation.

We use in-depth multiple comparative case studies and narrative analysis, by addressing a main research question, that is: "How do SEOs modify their business model to develop social innovation?".

In the present study we focus on the minor cultural heritage field in the South of Italy, where SEOs play an increasingly crucial role in enhancing minor cultural heritage sites that have often been abandoned by both the State and private enterprises. They are able to respond to the social need for broader cultural heritage consumption and make abandoned sites available, filling a welfare gap (Pol and Ville, 2009; Murray *et al.*, 2010; Caulier-Grice *et al.*, 2012). In particular, they have restored sites for the local communities, generating economic and social value and employment opportunities, intervening in severe situations of social distress among vulnerable people and empowering poor and marginalized segments of the population. The societal challenge of SEOs in minor cultural heritage lies in proactive social change processes activated by innovators, bricoleurs, public actors, religious institutions, private organizations and citizens giving birth to new forms of entrepreneurship, participation, community relations and work (Consiglio and Riitano, 2015). As small new business, these cultural SEOs, do not have access to a full range of funding alternatives and face several challenges for their survival and success. In light of this, they foster pluri-activities for social purpose and "*making do with resource at hand*" strategies, consistent with bricolage and social bricolage theory (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Kang, 2017).

The importance of cultural heritage in stressed in current European policies in relation to a number of societal challenges, and how cultural firms are called to innovatively respond to such challenges, experimenting innovative business models and allowing a more effective and fair distribution, access and enhancement of culture and social issue.

Our study contributes to the academic debate in several distinctive ways. First, we offer a reply to the literature on SEOs, by exploring their main organizational features and by enhancing the understanding of their innovative and social dimensions for the developing of social innovation (Johnson *et al.*, 2008; Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Michelini, 2012). Second, we extend and enrich studies on social bricolage (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010), applying the theory to the rising cultural economy in Italy and capturing the peculiar context of the minor cultural heritage in the South of Italy, where ventures have arisen to meet this social need for cultural consumption.

Third, by combining social bricolage and business model innovation we propose a novel conceptual framework for the study of SEOs, showing that social and cultural goals, and the paths to market and economic outcomes, are equally prioritized in creating social innovation. In response to the growing emergence of SEOs globally and the positive social value these organizations deliver, we apply both narratives as an in-depth qualitative methodology to empirically advance the understanding of their business models and how they use creative approaches to attract resources and apply in novel ways to face challenges (Griffiths *et al.*, 2013). We believe that understanding the SEOs' business model innovation is crucial for sustaining the long-term growth of these organizations. The remainder of this article is organized into four sections. The first section describes the background and framework connecting our approaches. It analyses links between SEOs and social bricolage framework and explores the concept of SEOs' business model innovation. The second section introduces

the research design and study site, explaining the criteria for analysis, methodology and procedures for data collection. The third section discusses and compares the cases and narratives, developing a conceptual framework for SEOs' business model in the entrepreneurial process and management of minor cultural heritage. The final section discusses contributions and conclusions. It also acknowledges the limitations of our research and highlights avenues for future studies.

2. Background and framework

2.1 SEOs and the entrepreneurial opportunity of social bricolage

SEOs combine two traditionally distinct models: a social welfare model pursuing a societal development mission and a revenue generation model that pursues profit through commercial activities (Battilana *et al.*, 2012). They can adopt a for-profit or a non-profit legal form and occur in many industries, including education, healthcare, inclusion and cultural heritage (Mair and Martí, 2006; Leadbeater, 2007; Seelos *et al.*, 2011; Mair *et al.*, 2012; Mintzberg and Azevedo, 2012). The European Commission (Borzaga, 2020) noted that the concept of social enterprise has been refined over the last few decades through legislative activities designed to regulate these new types of SEO.

In the social entrepreneurship literature, bricolage is the dominant approach identified for understanding their behaviours (Servantie and Rispal, 2018).

Bricolage in SEOs describes 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.*, 2011b). Previous studies (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Mair and Martí, 2006; Desa and Basu, 2013; Janssen *et al.*, 2018) suggest that SEOs' bricolage could be defined as "making do" with the resources to hand, as a way to provide innovative solutions for social needs that traditional organizations fail to address. Within constrained environments, SEOs may engage in bricolage as a means to access human and financial capital, to implement ideas and deal with any strategic weaknesses that obstruct their pursuit of social improvements (Anthony *et al.*, 2008).

Since Di Domenico *et al.* (2010), the literature has recognized "social bricolage" as a concept in its own right, conceptually distinct from other forms of bricolage. It is defined as a set of six constructs. The first three are from traditional bricolage:

(1) Making do, defined as the combination of available resources to solve new problems and opportunities;

(2) Refusal to be constrained by limitations, which for SEOs include financial limitations, inadequate market returns and the governance gap; and

(3) Improvisation, where bricolage actors reconfigure themselves as bricoleurs to be creative under pressure, "*to create order out of whatever materials were at hand*" and to replace a "*traditional order with an improvised order*" (Weick, 1993, pp. 639–640).

Then they developed:

(4) Social value creation, the dynamic process of resource creation involving skills development, social capital and community cohesion;

(5) Stakeholder participation, the involvement of different private and public actors in the creation, entrepreneurial process, governance structures and engagement of SEOs, in response to social needs; and

(6) Persuasion, the process of influencing to acquire new resources and support.

These six elements form a contextualized set of social action capabilities that can be leveraged by SEOs to create social value.

The concept of SEOs as social bricoleurs was described by Zahra *et al.* (2009). Social bricoleurs have intimate knowledge of the local environment and experiences and locally available resources to address small-scale local social needs and connections to the community. They share the common features of social entrepreneurs, including skilful management of unexpected opportunities, spontaneous innovation, improvised risk and rearranging resources to create social value (Peredo and McLean, 2006; Bacq and Janssen, 2011; Zollo *et al.*, 2016).

Social bricolage is an entrepreneurial opportunity to address emergent social needs, in contexts characterized by scarce resources, high levels of economic uncertainty and seasonal activities (Desa, 2012; Desa and Basu, 2013; Bacq *et al.*, 2015; Zollo *et al.*, 2017; Janssen *et al.*, 2018).

In these contexts, social innovation is a crucial concept encompassing social entrepreneurship. As known, social innovation studies cover the social processes of innovation itself, particularly innovations with a social purpose. In this context, ventures are seen as agents of social innovation in society, "*who help find solutions to social challenges, through creative and innovative products and ideas*" (Waasdorp and Ruijter, 2011, p. 72). Gundry *et al.* (2011b) studied the impact of social entrepreneurs' social bricolage in developing social innovation. Social entrepreneurs' ability to provide innovative solutions, to attract and use relevant resources depends directly on the extent to which they use bricolage (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, b).

According to Zollo *et al.* (2017), entrepreneurial bricolage may be interpreted as the way modern entrepreneurs catalyse social innovation by effectively: (1) combining available resources in an ingenious fashion and (2) entering new markets that are ignored by their competitors and seizing the latent profitable and attractive opportunities.

Following Kickul *et al.* (2018, p. 409), "*social entrepreneurs' innovative thinking and actions, their ability to recognize and create opportunities and the use of available resources with little or no cost, that is, their bricolage behaviour*" catalyse social innovation.

In this paper, we want to extent the understanding of the relationship between the adoption of social bricolage approach and the developing of social innovation by SEOs. This relationship becomes even more important in the field of minor cultural heritage, where SEOs are establishing, because characterized by relational capacity, network implementation and spontaneous cooperative activities.

2.2 Business model innovation of SEOs

Over the last few years, business models have become subject to innovation (e.g. Chesbrough, 2010; Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Foss and Saebi, 2017; Heikkilä *et al.*, 2017). Business model innovation "*is about how to do business in new ways*" (Amit and Zott, 2020, p. 4). Several scholars have explored business model innovation as a way to overcome the limitations of the traditional frameworks in analysing new forms of business, specifically that with a social component (e.g. Yunus, 2009; Yunus *et al.*, 2010). Relatedly, the term business model innovation is often used to signify social innovations that facilitate inclusive growth (Spiess-Knafl *et al.*, 2015) or target low-income consumers (Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016). Scholars who have explored these new forms of business model are like to adjust the traditional business model framework. Recently academic research offered various perspectives of the business model innovation concept, such as the social business model that is "*inherently and explicitly social*" in its mission and purpose (Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Michelini, 2012; Wilson and Post, 2013). An emerging body of literature is focused on how SEOs innovate their own business model (Lee, 2015; Rahdari *et al.*, 2016; Reficco *et al.*, 2021).

Several social managers contribute to the business model innovation processes "*by adopting bricolage practices, making do with whatever they have at hand, recombining resources and challenging conventional processes*" (Do Vale *et al.*, 2021, p. 102).

In businesses with strong social implications, authors argued that the business model should be characterized by a consistent view of how SEOs generates revenues and profits. There are some specific aspects of SEOs' business models (Dees *et al.*, 2002; Seelos and Mair, 2007; Austin *et al.*, 2006; Santos *et al.*, 2009) that differ from those of commercial enterprises and traditional non-profit organizations.

According to Balan-Vnuk and Balan (2015), there are two key reasons for business model innovation in these social ventures: namely the achievement of economic sustainability and the gathering of funds to expand the provision of important services to the collectivity. Therefore, SEOs have been encouraged to innovate their business models to cope with resource-constrained environments (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Linna, 2013).

In light of these assumptions, we understand business model innovation as an outcome of the organizational change processes that identifying and describing innovative strategies to design sustainable business models (Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Foss and Saebi, 2017).

Following Amit and Zott (2020), a business model innovation strategy is the pattern of choices SEOs must make with respect to the following subjects: (1) adding novel activities as new activity system content or content innovation; (2) linking activities in novel ways, as new activity system structure or structure innovation; (3) changing one or more parties that perform any of the activities, as new activity system governance or governance innovation; (4) changing the value logic.

These four subjects of innovation derive from precise and constant contingencies, frequently mentioned in the literature on business model innovation (e.g. Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Michelini, 2012), that SEOs have to face, such as: lack of financial resources; locally embedded knowledge, skills and experience to be leveraged; learning by doing, experimenting trial and error; poor institutional support. These contingencies lead SEOs to make choices aimed at establishing and maintaining the social component.

With this focus, the research we present aims to respond to the call from scholars to theoretically and empirically extend the understanding of how SEOs design and reinvent their business model innovations to achieve the scope inherent in their mission (Short *et al.*, 2009; Wilson and Post, 2013; Balan-Vnuk and Balan, 2015; Reficco *et al.*, 2021).

3. Research design
3.1 Methodology
Our empirical analysis aimed to investigate the innovation in the business models adopted by cultural SEOs for social innovation creation. This analysis is part of a wider research project targeting "SEOs and Third Sector ventures in different industries in Southern Italy". The project was carried out in partnership with the Italian non-profit Association, which helped us to locate SEOs and other ventures to interview.

In the last ten years in some areas of Southern Italy, marked by socio-economic-structural weakness, new ventures have launched several social innovation projects to manage minor and abandoned cultural heritage (Consiglio and Riitano, 2015). They mainly aim to promote and strengthen intangible structures for the social, civil and economic development of the southern regions.

This emerging field of research lacks a consolidated theoretical basis, so we adopted a qualitative method based on an inductive and interpretative research approach (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). We used a comparative case study method and narratives (Czarniaswka, 2004) to provide a structured approach through an in-depth study.

The collection of the cases was based on three criteria, to provide a coherent and integrated framework to answer the research question.

First, we considered cultural SEOs that had taken on one or more sites of historical, cultural and archaeological landscape interest and that:

(1) manage cultural sites (e.g. churches, catacombs, historical buildings, villages, marine protected areas and gardens, owned publicly, privately, ecclesiastically or through a public–private partnership) previously in a state of neglect and decay, through activities of recovery, promotion and enhancement by and for the community;

(2) guarantee the public use of these sites and

(3) have defined a sustainable business and organizational model, going beyond voluntarism.

Using these three dimensions and a desk analysis, we mapped all the Italian cultural SEOs to obtain an overview. We then focused on those located in the regions of Southern Italy. This gave 22 cultural SEOs. This first sample allowed us to identify common behaviour patterns, similarities and differences in the cases, and organizational and decision-making processes.

Second, we examined the 22 ventures focussing on their social outcomes, studying their financial and mission statements, their activities, etc. We used the six constructs of the social bricolage framework to select suitable cases. This led us to remove four ventures from the later stages of analysis, because they did not fully meet the constructs. Finally, we removed another three ventures because they were unwilling to participate in our research. This left 15 suitable ventures for interviews with informants. Our aim in presenting the cases was to show how cultural ventures within resource-poor environments implement social bricolage constructs and justify an investigation of the social entrepreneurial actions used to counter constraints, to respond to environmental challenges, to take advantage of opportunities, to innovate and grow despite limitations (Cunha, 2005; Wierenga, 2020). The comparative case study analysis also allowed us to consider how the approach of social bricolage enable cultural SEOs to create, extend and strengthen social innovation projects and activities.

According to the literature (Gundry *et al.*, 2011a, b; Zollo *et al.*, 2017) the ability of entrepreneurs to develop social innovation depends on the extent to which they use bricolage. Therefore our analysis allowed us to study this process with a specific reference to SEOs in the minor cultural heritage entrepreneurship and management, where entrepreneurs have to face a context of scarce resources. In particular, these ventures are in the peculiar circumstance to discover new ways to use resources which are usually rejected or ignored and combine existing unused resources to potentially unlock a new source of value creation (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Do Vale *et al.*, 2021).

According to Baker and Nelson (2005) and Di Domenico *et al.* (2010), through reusing and recombining the resources at hand to cope with new problems and uncover opportunities, social bricolage is the starting construct which guarantees the arise of a SEO. As we present in the next section, this can help SEOs in innovating content, structure and governance as well as in identifying new opportunities, all of which, accordingly, entail the implementation of business model innovation. Through the in-depth case studies on the business model innovation strategies, we highlight what SEOs aim to do to innovate their business model. The results of the narrative analysis will allow us to understand how SEOs business model are shaped by the use of social bricolage.

This can be traced through the adoption of specific innovation creating and balancing social and economic value. Table 1 gives a description of the 15 cultural ventures studied.

Cases	Foundation	Legal form	Type of cultural site	Business orientation	Ownership	Start-up capital	Life cycle phase	Principal activities	SEOs' members interviewed
#1	2006	Social cooperative A)	Religious buildings	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Private grant	Consolidation	Cultural, commercial and performing arts	President, vice-president
#2	2012	Foundation	Ancient village	Not for profit	Public	Public grant	Consolidation	Cultural and performing arts	Senior member, vice-president
#3	2009	Association	Churches	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Own capital	Growing	Cultural, touristic and social	President, founder
#4	2017	Social cooperative A)	Archaeological sites	Not for profit	Public	Own capital	Growing	Cultural, social, touristic and commercial	President
#5	2008	Association	Historical building	Not for profit	Private	Own capital	Consolidation	Co-working incubators and music events	President, vice-president, co-founder
#6	2005	Foundation	Woollen mill	Not for profit	Public–private partnership	Public capital	Growing	Co-working incubators, cultural, and healthcare services	President, co-founder, senior member
#7	2013	Foundation	Archaeological sites	Not for profit	Public	Private capital from venture capitalist	Consolidation	Cultural and social	Co-founder, senior partner
#8	2009	Social cooperative A)	Churches and catacombs	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Private capital from venture capitalist	Consolidation	Cultural, touristic and social	President, senior member
#9	2010	Association	Protected sea area	Not for profit	Public	Own capital	Consolidation	Research study, protection and enhancement	President, vice-president
#10	2012	Foundation	Religious buildings	Not for profit	Ecclesiastical	Own capital	Growing	Cultural and social	Founder

(*continued*)

Table 1.
Main characteristics of
analysed cases

Table 1.

Cases	Foundation	Legal form	Type of cultural site	Business orientation	Ownership	Start-up capital	Life cycle phase	Principal activities	SEOs' members interviewed
#11	2005	Foundation	Ancient village	Not for profit	Public	Own capital	Consolidation	Co-working incubators, cultural and performing arts	Funding partner
#12	2012	Social cooperative A)	Underground cave	Not for profit	Public	Private grant	Growing	Cultural and touristic	Founder, vice-president, hr manager
#13	2003	Association	Eco-museum	Not for profit	Private	Private grant	Consolidation	Cultural, performing arts and social activities	President, founder
#14	2013	Social cooperative A)	Archaeological sites	Not for profit	Public	Public grant	Growing	Research study, protection and enhancement	President, co-founder, regular member
#15	2010	Association	Churches and historical buildings	Not for profit	Public–private partnership	Own capital	Consolidation	Cultural and social	Co-founder

Note(s): The spectrum of social entrepreneurship in Italy includes both legally recognized and de facto social enterprises (associations and foundations with significant market activities and explicit social aims; social cooperative A type) delivering social, health and educational services; social cooperative (type B) providing work integration

The organizations were from different geographical locations within Southern Italy (Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicilia) and carry out a range of activities in the cultural and social domain. The cases include SEOs in both urban and rural locations.

We believe that approach of explicit comparison is a valid way to show events surrounding the emergence of the study SEOs, their intended scope and the motivation of their founders. This enabled us to go beyond the specificities of a single case to identify similarities and differences through careful abstraction (Yin, 2014), providing a coherent and integrated framework to answer our research question. The cases were purposefully selected to be information-rich, revelatory and unique (Stake, 1995).

3.2 Data collection and procedures

We analysed empirical material to identify actual experiences in the study SEOs. Data collection used two main methods:

(1) Documentary analysis;

(2) Semi-structured interviews.

In this study, both data collection methods and investigators were triangulated (Denzin, 1978). Issues emerged from the data rather than the data being fitted to predetermined categories. Fieldwork was carried out between October 2020 and July 2021.

3.2.1 Documentary analysis. To better contextualize raw data emerging from the field, the author not directly involved in the interviews collected and reviewed information from a series of supplementary sources including organizational charts, annual reports, partnership documentation, budgets, business plan, social responsibility statements, newsletters, internal communications, emails, archival material, press reviews, websites and social networks. Data arises from secondary documents have been analysed and interpreted in order to provide background information and details, that informants may have forgotten during the interviews. These information allowed us to construct Table 1 where the main characteristics of the cases involved in the study have been described. Moreover, documentary analysis also contains broad coverage of data helpful in contextualizing our research within social bricolage.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews. We carried out in-depth interviews with informants from each enterprise. The choice of the interviewees was in line with the qualitative narrative-style approach. We focused on well-connected and informed respondents, to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In the first step of the interviews round we involved a key informant at each organization, such as the Founder, the President, the CEO or the senior manager; in a second step, further interviews followed with other informants identified as important, such as: co-founders, vice-president, members, founding members. This approach gave us access to multiple individuals from each venture.

All interviews were conducted by two of the three authors, through Skype call. We also used site visits and observations to add depth to the case studies. Each interview lasted between 90 and 180 min. Interviews were based on an open, wide-ranging, protocol and guided through a semi-structured questionnaire. This included questions about the start-up initiative; social innovation projects, public and private partners and actors involved and partnerships activated; human resource management practices, venture capitalist involvement, donations, public–private partnerships and calls for bids. We focused on understanding the governance structure, organizational and business model innovation and sustainability model. The questionnaire aimed to stimulate interviewees' interest in the research process.

At the end of each interview, the authors met to discuss what had emerged. They compared notes and interview records with the internal documentation previously analysed.

All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim, to then build the narratives. This allowed us to focus on statements underlining the social dimension and social innovation production. To respect the anonymity of our interviewees, we allocated codes to them and the SEOs (see Table 1).

The next few sections provide insights and explanations from the empirical findings, and propose an integrated conceptual framework that combines the innovative and social dimensions that can be leveraged by cultural SEOs to create social innovation.

4. The analysis
4.1 Social bricolage of SEOs in minor cultural heritage entrepreneurship
The first empirical data collected were extracts of text from interviews with informants about the processes of social bricolage adopted by the SEOs. This section aims to explain how the different constructs of social bricolage informed the creation, the entrepreneurial process and management of cultural SEOs. We chose to illustrate the data extractions and the cross-case comparison through a synthesis in Table 2, because of space constraints. We drew on the conceptual framework of social bricolage proposed by Di Domenico *et al.* (2010, p. 698).

The first stage findings indicate social bricolage as a way to better understand SEOs strategies in terms of development and exploitation of resources. In this respect, social bricolage can be considered a key constituent action of the process of business model innovation.

4.2 Strategies of cultural SEOs business model innovation
Drawing on previous work (Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016; Cicellin *et al.*, 2019; Gasparin *et al.*, 2021) and on the business model innovation framework (Chesbrough, 2010; Foss and Saebi, 2017; Amit and Zott, 2020), we have organized the narratives, considering nine different business model themes, each corresponding to a specific strategy for business model innovation. We identified these nine main strategies starting from the business model innovation framework (Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Michelini, 2012; Amit and Zott, 2020) described in the theoretical framework. The strategies reveal peculiarities of the cases and highlight courses of action, activities, decision-making processes and organizational choices aimed at establishing and maintaining innovation and the social mark and developing social innovation projects (Yunus *et al.*, 2010; Wilson and Post, 2013; Balan-Vnuk and Balan, 2015; Reficco *et al.*, 2021). The strategies were common across the fifteen ventures and were

(1) Co-participation;

(2) Generative leadership;

(3) Socially-oriented activities;

(4) Asset-based community development;

(5) Cross-subsidization;

(6) Management of surplus;

(7) Grassroots;

(8) Social relationship

(9) Empowerment.

The next section describes these strategies within the cases, using the narrative analysis and drawing on qualitative data to connect theoretical arguments and cases. Each of the nine strategies

Constructs of social bricolage	Explanation from literature (Di Domenico et al., 2010)	Evidence from the cases
Making do	Combination of resources or making do with limited resources and creating something new, such as a new market, a new product or service or a combination, to provide social value. Using discarded, disused, or unwanted resources for new purposes, and using "hidden" or untapped local resources that other organizations fail to recognize, value, or make adequate use of for communities	Cultural enjoyment and development of totally abandoned and inaccessible sites (#3, #4, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10, #12 and #14). Creating a tourist market in disreputable and unknown neighbourhoods (#8, #11 and #14). Involving local community and citizens in projects to generate new sustainable revenue streams and contribute to income by asset-based development activities (#1, #2, #8 and #15). Employing long-term unemployed people with adapted skills in the business (#4, #6, #8 and #10) and training young people for the restoration of archaeological works (#4, #7, #14 and #15)
Refusal to be constrained by limitations	Refusal to be constrained by limitations, trying out solutions as tactical responses to pervading institutional structures/ rules; subverting the limitations imposed by available resource environments particularly in their ability to create social value	Interpreting laws and bypassing institutional and organizational norms by adapting structures to generate new cultural and social activities (#2, #6, #9 and #12). Altering governance systems and subverting hostile environmental situations to recover landscape and sea heritage with own expertise and work (#2, #9, #11 and #12). Involving key stakeholders and citizens in decision-making and organizational model (#1, #3, #4, #6, #7, #8, #10, #11, #13, #14 and #15). Running social innovation projects with under-resourced communities, in deprived and abandoned areas and sites (#5, #6, #8 and #13)
Improvisation	Improvisation to enable active pursuit of social purpose. Improvising through "best-fit" approaches within the constraints of the limited resources available. Process of trial and error	Acquiring legitimacy by citizens and stakeholders through free creative events in the recovered sites and useful activities for urban and landscape development, such as cleaning seaside, gardens, adorning squares across churches or archaeological sites (#1, #6, #9, #11 and #12). "Door-to-door" and advocacy as tools for achieving community consensus and persuading local authority of community needs leading to creation of SEO (#2, #4 and #12). Use of social media, blog, and local media to disseminate organizational purpose and mission to a wider audience (#1, #6, #8, #9, #12, #14 and #15)

(continued)

Constructs of social bricolage	Explanation from literature (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010)	Evidence from the cases
Social value creation	Generating employment opportunities for founders and others, work inclusion and integration, skills development, social capital, community cohesion, helping disadvantaged people, responding to social unmet needs of communities	Running different social projects and offering services to the local communities in the renewed cultural sites, such as afterschool classes, music and sports courses for disadvantaged children, training courses for long-term unemployed people and to develop tourism management and culture-related skills (#3, #5, #8, #10 and #14). Making cultural sites accessible and creating dedicated paths for people with different abilities (#2, #4, #5, #8, #11 and #15). Employing people from the neighbourhood where the site is located and immigrants (#1, #4, #6 and #8). Enhancing community cohesion policies, such as cleaning area around the cultural site, improving commercial activities of the area, intercultural exchange and integration (#5, #7, #8, #9, #13 and #15)
Stakeholder participation	Governance structures and decision making, board membership, strategy determination and implementation. Social networking activity, access to expertise and new contracts, support from public and private actors for the business	Accessing experts, professionals and new contacts with valuable resources in the start-up phase to benefit the enterprise (#3, #5, #6, #9, #13 and #14). Social networking activity with communities, involving them in decision-making processes, project work, and supporting contacts with health authority to get permissions (#1, #2, #6 and #8). Obtaining support from third sector actors to participate in national and EU-funded projects (#2, #3, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #11 and #15)
Persuasion	Influence and persuade important stakeholders to leverage acquisition of new resources and support to create social value	Managing continuous and steady actions in the start-up stages to convince local authority and private actors working for the development of Southern Italy, about the usefulness, effectiveness, and social value of the business case, by a physical F2F ("friend to friend") network (all). Acquiring ability to do "things" thanks to social legitimacy by citizens' associations (#4, #5, #8, #9 and #12). Influencing and convincing local public authority and key players to pursue the possibility of developing secure, architectural, equipment, modernization and maintenance works, and energy projects, in the sites and to obtain resources (#2, #3, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #12 and #15)

Table 2.

Source(s): Our elaboration, adapted from Di Domenico *et al.* (2010)

has a very strong social vocation which, as we explained in the discussion section, allows the SEOs to modify and reinvent their business model in order to produce social innovation.

(1) Co-participation

Cultural ventures often engage clients, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the creation of their products/services. We found that co-participation offers two main opportunities. First, it leverages resources. During the interviews, entrepreneurs explained that they used a range of tools and strategies to gather and assemble resources to establish their ventures. These were drawn from small loans provided by the community, sharing business activities (e.g. legal/ financial, engineering, marketing, organizational consultancy); and conjointly designing or creating the services. The president of Case #3 commented:

> Some of my friends worked on the business plan and the SWOT analysis . . . our first meetings were on the church stairs because my friends said that they would be inspired by the beauty of the site.

This co-participation also influenced some parts of the decision-making process. The president of Case #5 said:

> When we started to do on-site inspections with the superintendents to get building permits, some shopkeepers in the neighbourhood were very intrigued and told us that Italian and foreign tourists walking past the closed building often asked them why the Municipality does not organize concerts and events in that amazing hanging garden (. . .) A pizza restaurant owner promised that if this really happened he would donate ten free entrances to the pizzeria for each concert organized. This is still one of our best ideas!

Another aspect was the involvement of the target group. Stakeholders' involvement can be a precondition to guarantee the sustainability of the value proposition, because it means that the community has identified with the venture. Case #9 showed that this is even more important for local support of a territorial community. This continuous engagement of the community at different levels helped ventures to develop services that were affordable and met the community's social needs. The vice-president of Case #9 commented:

> The beach cleaning is an activity that strongly joins us as a community . . . we are grateful for this, because when we go to work the day after cleaning, we realize that we are more cheerful and motivated. We often find that at the end of each day, the same bathers are joining us in the protected area to help us to clean, because they know how beautiful it could be the next day if there is not even a cigarette butt. This results in passion that reaches visitors.

Co-participation also stimulates the growth and promotion of the local identity. The founder of Case #13 said:

> The museum credits include the phrase 'edited by all the people who have contributed with their stories to create this place'.

(2) Generative leadership

The second strategy, generative leadership (De Simone and Simoncini, 2012), is associated with SEOs' ability to build work relationship based on a shared vision and responsibility, and a feeling of belonging, identity, trust, empathy and loyalty. This was described by all our informants, who emphasized the role of inspirational, transformative and transformational managers in a constant process of engagement. For example, the senior member in Case #8 said:

> In the cooperative, we don't really see the mainstream boss–employee relationship. Brainstorming together is considered the basis of the company's strategy. Since my first day here, I have understood

that the cooperative doesn't need 'subordinate employees', but individuals who want to become a partner, and who treat the catacombs like their home (. . .) In doing our jobs together, we create a bond that goes beyond the working relationship.

The President of the same cooperative added:

Sharing organizational responsibilities is not a symptom of inability, it is working side by side, helping each other for the same scope . . . What can you do alone?

Generative leadership, sharing decisions and strategic choices, empowers workers and partners, who become fully aware of their abilities. The president of Case #1 described himself:

I'm not a leader, I feel like a trainer. My happiness is in watching my students writing theatre plays and winning prizes. I win with them. I think that founders and leaders of SEOs find out every day how to throw their hearts over obstacles.

Another peculiarity of generative leadership lies in avoiding any exercise of control over colleagues' behaviour and instead helping them to develop a feeling of co-responsibility for the projects. The co-founder of Case #6 said:

If you come to visit our spaces, you will not find anyone responsible for letting people in. The trust we have built in our personal and work relationships led us to give everyone copies of the key to offices and exhibition spaces so that everyone can feel at home, and can access the spaces at any time. We follow shared rules, so that everyone feels responsible for the project in the same way.

(3) Socially-oriented activities

The third strategy of cultural ventures focuses on social value creation (Santos *et al.*, 2009). SEOs' primary purpose is societal and their primary goals are socially beneficial. One of the guiding principles is the primacy of social and community objectives over individual ones. SEOs pursue societal interests through the interests of their members and beneficiaries, whenever socially relevant.

Social value is often achieved through going beyond the obvious actions, such as guided tours. One of the members of the cooperative in Case #14 explained:

At our archaeological site, school groups can take guided tours. However, a visit with a trained guide is only the final phase of the path that we have built for them. In the days before a visit, one of our members goes to visit each group in their classrooms to give them some information, and tell them about the place. This helps the young people be more aware of the place they are going to visit, and get more out of their visit.

The visit to the site can be the driving force of an educational approach, which is especially important in social hardship situations. Another informant from the same cooperative said:

School groups are generally very stimulated and curious about unique but unfortunately unknown places that are so close to their homes. With them, we also often deal with arguments that go beyond the historical–artistic issues because we understand that they are sensitive to issues not addressed in school programs, like environment and climate change, civic and civil education. We try to do our best with them, because they are the hope for future. Many of us were in their place years ago and without the birth of this cooperative who knows what would have happened to us? Our goal is to grow an educating community in the area.

The educational approach is also the key to encourage both young and older people to want to take care of the heritage. The co-founder of Case #7 stated:

We often witness the growth of community experiences, where citizens make a pact with the cultural heritage and other people in the district. Believing in the potential of human relationships,

community building and the sharing economy engenders a change of perspective, where a new community grows that identifies with the territory and decides to take care of it!

This happens because SEOs are able to start processes of reconversion of disused and/or abandoned cultural sites, giving them a second life and making them common goods through the launch of innovative services for the community. The co-founder of Case #15 explained:

The transformation of this abandoned site has allowed us to create new jobs for some of the people who supported us in the initial phase. Many of them have worked with us as volunteers, and their only incentive was intrinsic, because they wanted to be part of a place that is dear to them. Today they have experienced a social redemption by emancipation through their job placement as tour guides, after acquiring diplomas and degrees.

(4) Asset-based community development

SEOs are not interested in building up a sustainable competitive advantage; instead, they want to provide sustainable solutions (Santos *et al.*, 2009). They achieve this through an asset-based community development (ABCD) strategy that is relationship-driven (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). This strategy shows that connecting people to their shared interests and enabling them to exchange skills and resources helps communities to identify and act on important issues. SEOs aim to identify and mobilize the positive attributes of local government, businesses, non-profit organizations, voluntary associations and individuals, and foster social capital by recognizing that everyone can contribute to civil society. The president of Case #6 said:

We decided not to be just service providers but instead become a platform for starting different cultural and social projects, such as dance and music classes for disadvantaged children; community handicraft courses; a social restaurant for disabled young people; a garden designed, built and managed by local people; and an association of photographers and video-makers engaged in research on visual storytelling.

Similarly, the vice-president of Case #5 said:

We have become an urban laboratory and an ecosystem where informal groups, social incubators, associations, micro-enterprises, start-ups and other organizations can endorse their ideas and innovative projects for areas of urban decay . . . Besides the use of the spaces at the site, there are also projects to explore the local area through the support of local associations that deal with sustainable tourism, and bring together citizens and visitors.

This strategy also helps ventures to create resilient communities and enable citizens to live better. This follows the principles of so-called "proximity/closeness entrepreneurship" (in Italy, *imprenditoria di prossimità*), offering a contribution to local development. This mindset was illustrated by the president of Case #13:

We believe that the glass is half full rather than half empty. This is why we (as founders) were the first to make available and share our economic and financial resources and skills . . ..Following the same approach, we guarantee participation without any entry fee. Rather than setting a fee to become part of the community, we believe in the ability of those who use spaces and services to autonomously define how to contribute to the project through different ways.

(5) Cross-subsidization

Another theme is the cross-subsidization strategy used to balance profit and social activities. Profits facilitate SEOs, but are not their primary purpose. They are used to cover the costs of

services, which are usually priced below the market rate or even free, subsidized by revenues from fee-paying or more expensive services (Marmot *et al.*, 2008). The president of Case #4 explained:

> Our sources of income are mainly the sales of tickets for guided tours and events, with a small percentage from individual donations. This covers all the costs related to management, maintenance, and personnel, and the cooperative reinvests the operating surplus in social projects for the neighbourhood (. . .) These projects aim to offer services to citizens for free, such as afterschool clubs, summer camps, and workshops to encourage aggregation and socialization . . .

The use of cross-subsidization often means that ventures try to cater to the needs of people who are not able to afford the regular price of the products or services. One of the founders of Case #5 said:

> Site entry is free to allow access especially for younger people, and avoid creating social barriers. This allows us to cover only one third of our spending needs, but the rest is covered by commercial activities at the site and by public funding.

(6) Management of surplus

This was one of the most common strategies among the fifteen cultural SEOs. Most of them used financial surpluses to support sustainability, entrepreneurial processes and develop cultural projects, and placed this at the core of their mission statements. Many of them have a statutory obligation to use profits and financial surpluses to support their activities, because of their non-profit nature. The senior member of Case #8 commented:

> Though the purpose is not profit, the cooperative is guided by efficiency and effectiveness criteria, pursued as a guarantee of quality of resources allocated (. . .) Profits are reinvested within the organization for ordinary and extraordinary maintenance of the site.

Another member of the same cooperative said:

> At the beginning we had to use the first ticketing receipts to tackle site improvement works that the Diocesan Curia did not want to deal with, even though the concession had not yet been completed, and the cooperative was not fully managing the sites . . . To date, the approach we have adopted is to establish and feed a small fund used to finance small social projects beyond the mission of cultural and tourist enjoyment and use. These projects aim to have a positive impact on the people who support us or who participated in the fulfilment of our main cultural project.

The founding partner of Case #11 positioned the Foundation halfway between profit and non-profit:

> I remember once we managed to finance a guided tour for the fifth grade children of the village school. Many of those children could never have paid the entry fee. It was significant to have them here to tell us about their experiences and to thank us for all the beautiful things they had been able to see.

This strategy also highlights that profit is not the main issue for cultural ventures, but a way to increase the work they could do, as the founder of Case #12 commented:

> We have been growing by 15% (turnover) every year for five years. Some people think we are crazy because instead of taking the ticket collection fees, we continue to invest in new equipment, events and the maintenance that is always needed in a site like this (. . .). We all believe that this is right (. . .). We don't need all the money ourselves, and we want to be able to contribute. Obviously, we cannot work for free, but we know that our business has positive effects on both a personal and a working level.

(7) Grassroots

Bottom-up approaches allow citizens to define their own goals and how to achieve them. Grassroots movements are community-based and created in a given district, region, or community as the basis for addressing political, social or economic issues. Grassroots movements, using self-organization, self-entrepreneurship and self-determination, encourage community members to contribute by taking responsibility and action for their community (Kelly and Caputo, 2006; Igalla *et al.*, 2019). These movements often become structured projects backed by local ventures. They can quickly gain momentum at local level because they are generally run by local people. The founder of Case #3 commented*:

> Our association was born from the will of eight people who were already involved in associative experiences in the city and had always been at the forefront of social and environmental recovery activities. It seemed obvious to us to combine forces and skills under a single name and create an association that would offer several social and cultural services, starting from the recovery of small churches that had been abandoned, but had priceless artistic value. These four buildings are located a short distance from each other in an area of socio-cultural hardship but with great potential for sustainable development.

Cultural SEOs primarily involve civilians advocating a cause to spur change at local, national, or international levels. One senior partner of Case #7 noted:

> Since it was set up, our foundation has never received any kind of public or private funding. The work in both the recovery phase, which lasted almost five years, and in the management phase, has been carried out entirely by the founding members.

The cases show that local people have often joined forces to achieve a common goal, as illustrated by the founder of Case #10:

> (. . .) The Community Foundation was born . . . out of the need to bring together all the local people who have worked on a common goal: to improve the quality of life through education of young people, the recovery of historical and artistic spaces and to use culture for good (. . .). The foundation promotes the culture of solidarity, giving, and social responsibility.

(8) Social relationships

The SEOs' revenue models varied. They often use innovative resource mobilization strategies such as partnership, co-creation and volunteer support. Most of those in our study developed networks of social relationships with common social goals. The president of Case #9 said:

> Few people would disagree that relationships matter in entrepreneurship. But at the same time, few people are able to admit how difficult it is, especially in contexts such as ours [marine protected area] to build and maintain a solid network of relationships capable of supporting environmental protection initiatives. Social relationships and the networks of other entrepreneurs and all the people who in different ways and with different efforts had helped and supported us matter, because they are resources that can be leveraged in the start-up process. (. . .) We were lucky: social capital and trust greatly characterize our business.

Building social relationships also has a positive return in the consolidation phase. The senior member of Case #2 said:

> Activities are the results of social interactions and mechanisms. Entrepreneurship cannot merely be understood in terms of 'personality characteristics' or in sterile economic terms. To build this type of relationship, you need time and energy (. . .). For months, even after obtaining the first planning permission, we continued to meet people to encourage word-of-mouth sharing. Sharing and

discussing ideas with different people become the driving force for change, weaving a network, and winning people's trust by telling them about the motivation and reasons for your project."

Building social relationships also affects the revenue model of SEOs. Many ventures depend on philanthropy, although others follow a non-profit approach and include some degree of cost-recovery by selling goods and services. Other sources of funding include micro-donations or business angel investments. Both of these are the result of building social and relational capital. The co-founder of Case #14 explained:

Alongside the increase in the needs of minor cultural heritage, our organization has expanded and been supported by a conspicuous philanthropic donation and micro-donations from individuals, as well as corporate sponsorships (. . .). All these donors and sponsors understood and shared the social values and goals of the project (. . .). Their support is crucial to being able to deliver our services.

Both small donations from a group of supporters and the stable support from a big donor support the projects. This makes them a central part of a strategic network that is based on social relationships. The vice-president of Case #2 added:

Since we started, we have found a large number of micro-donors who have really understood and wanted to collaborate in cultural projects, to focus on social impact beyond the ROI.

(9) Empowerment

Empowerment is a process by which people, ventures and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them (Zimmerman, 1995). We suggest that empowerment is a mediator in the relationship between entrepreneurial practices and the achievement of social goals. Empowerment strategies built a strong sharing of the organizational mission and activated intrinsic motivation. The vice-president of Case #1 commented:

Those who come to us often stay with us for a long time, and work with us in different ways. This is the best aspect of our work, living a strong sharing climate. After taking a tour, some visitors feel so involved in the project that they put themselves forward as volunteers, and start actively participating in the restoration and cleaning activities in particular. Since we re-opened to the public, we now have about 200 stable volunteers per year.

The HR manager of Case #12 noted:

People are strongly motivated by the quality and purposes of the work, allowing them to take care of the relational aspects, freely build customized services for the community and be involved in an experimental and innovative project (. . .)

However, volunteering is not a sustainable long-term solution to finding staff, as a senior member of Case #6 noted:

A lot of us have grown up in the voluntary sector. The challenge we actually face is that many of our staff work on a voluntary basis. They are vital for the continuity of our daily business, but the truth is that we risk losing them and therefore not being able to go on.

The president of Case #14 agreed, saying:

In the long term we've tended to move from grants to contracts and we're quite comfortable with contracts now.

Other challenging issues include social and economic participation and empowerment of vulnerable groups by generating income and employment opportunities. The vice-president of Case #12 said:

In our project no one works on their own. Since we reopened the site three years ago, the team has been working without a salary. From the beginning, however, the goal for everyone has been to create job opportunities for founders and volunteers and finally from this year we will be able to get monthly remuneration.

In order to enrich our findings, the following table (Table 3) outlines the main practices' examples of the nine strategies. The table intersects our selected cases and the nine strategies, illustrating the main decoded interpretations of narrative fragments.

5. Discussion

We have analysed how social bricolage can affect SEOs' business model innovation. We have examined fifteen narratives, all involving variations on the same theme: how the innovation of the business model can highlight its social dimension, in order to produce social innovation in the field of minor cultural heritage. Following the business model innovation framework, the cases revealed a strong social mark and identified peculiar innovative strategies that both respond to social needs and long-term sustainability.

In this sense, the nine strategies of the business model innovation can be explained in light of the social business model, that is a recognized form of the business model innovation, and in particular through four main social dimensions (see Table 4) of Yunus *et al.* (2010), Michelini and Fiorentino (2012), Michelini (2012) and Cicellin *et al.* (2019), that are:

(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);

(4) start-up capital (i.e. the way in which the venture is funded, including through venture or start-up capital, and the nature of the entrepreneurship).

The literature suggests that the social business model represents the most accommodating business models with which SEOs can implement their activities (Michelini and Fiorentino, 2012).

Social relationships and *empowerment* are part of *start-up capital*, because the networks of informal social relations are fundamental elements of SEOs' start-up capital. *Co-participation* and *generative leadership* are part of the *social value proposition* criterion, because SEOs place the fulfilment of the needs of minor and abandoned cultural heritage at the heart of their value propositions. *Socially-oriented activities*, *asset-based community development* and *cross-subsidization* are linked to the *social value equation* criterion, as ways to balance profit and social activities. The *management of surplus* and *grassroots involvement* are linked to the *social profit equation* criterion, because the decision to reinvest in institutional activities is a crucial aspect of ventures' choice to allocate profits to their social mission.

Moreover, the cases showed the crucial link between social bricolage and business model innovation. In our cases, social bricolage was the constitutive and foundational approach that allowed the cultural SEOs to develop social innovative strategies despite scarce resources. Social bricolage is used in both the short and longer term, including into the phases of growth and consolidation in cultural SEOs. According to Zollo *et al.* (2018) and Fan *et al.* (2019) social bricolage is a measure that does not exclude the necessity for a structural solution to guarantee long-term sustainability and efficiency. As a result, more actively our SEOs engaged in social bricolage approach, more innovative the implemented business models

Cases	Co-participation	Generative leadership	Socially-oriented activities	Asset-based community development	Cross-subsidization	Management of surplus	Grassroots	Social relationship	Empowerment
				Business model innovation strategies					
#1		Decisions and strategic choices sharing				Not for profit purpose Reinvesting in institutional activities			Strong use of the social mission to enhance intrinsic motivation
#2								Focus on building relational capital Engagement in cultural heritage cause	
#3	Continuous involvement of local community						Involvement of local organizations		
#4					Subsidizing of social projects by revenues from fee-paying				
#5	Co-design of the heritage experience			Relationship-driven activities	Guarantee free entry for the poorer users				

(*continued*)

Table 3.
Exploring the narratives: examples of business model innovation strategies

Cases	Co-participation	Generative leadership	Socially-oriented activities	Business model innovation strategies Asset-based community development	Cross-subsidization	Management of surplus	Grassroots	Social relationship	Empowerment
#6	Co-responsibility								Contribute of voluntary staff
#7			Involvement of youngers in heritage taking care	Fostering social capital			Focus on self-funding inspired by intrinsic motivations		
#8									
#9	Community bonding	Shared vision						Focus on networking to build strategic partnerships	
#10							Common values, common goals		
#11						Using profit to avoid social barriers			
#12					Profit as the way to further the "dream job"				Focus on quality and purpose of cultural work Employment of disadvantaged workers

(*continued*)

Table 3.

Table 3.

Cases	Co-participation	Generative leadership	Business model innovation strategies							
			Socially-oriented activities	Asset-based community development	Cross-subsidization	Management of surplus	Grassroots	Social relationship	Empowerment
#13	Promotion of the local identity			Contributing to civil society and local development					
#14			Social value creation Setting up of educational approach					Sharing values and goals whit donors	Evolving from informal work to job contracts
#15			Disseminate cultural heritage concept as a common good Reuse of abandoned heritage						

Narratives from cultural SEOs	Business model innovation strategies	Social business model criteria
"Social relationships [. . .] supported us matter because they are resource that can leverage in the start-up process. [. . .] We are lucky: social capital and trust greatly characterize our business"	Social relationship	Start-up capital
"After taking a tour, some visitors feel so involved in the project that they put themselves forward as volunteers, and start actively participating [. . .]"	Empowerment	
"The beach cleaning is an activity that strongly joins us as a community. We are grateful of this, because [. . .] we realize that we are more cheerful and motivated"	Co-participation	Social value proposition
"Sharing organizational responsibilities is not a symptom of inability, it is working side by side, helping each other for the same scope . . . What can you do alone ?"	Generative leadership	
"Many of us were in their place years ago and without the birth of this cooperative who knows what would have happened to us? Our goal is to grow an educating community in the area [. . .]"	Socially-oriented activities	Social value equation
"We decided not to be just service providers but instead become a platform for starting different cultural and social projects [. . .]"	Asset-based development	
"Site entry is free to allow access especially for younger people, and avoid creating social barriers. This allows us to cover only one-third of our spending needs, but the rest is covered by commercial activities at the site and by public funding"	Cross-subsidization	
"[. . .] The Community Foundation was born . . . out of the need to bring together all the local people who have worked on a common goal"	Grassroots	Social profit equation
"Profits are reinvested within the organization for ordinary and extraordinary maintenance of the site"	Management of surplus	

Table 4.
Innovation strategies
and social criteria for
SEO business models,
illustrated by cases

were. When SEOs actively engage in bricolage, the impact on the innovativeness of the business model is greater than that of their entrepreneurial ability (Fan *et al.*, 2019).

We therefore suggest that each construct of social bricolage is related to one or more of the nine strategies of business model innovation.

(1) *Making do* is linked to *asset-based community development* because SEOs provide new services where none existed before, using disused resources such as minor and abandoned cultural heritage for new purposes, creating social value.

(2) *Refusal to be constrained by limitations* is linked to *cross-subsidization,* because the SEOs' ability to balance profit and social activities subverts the limitations, allowing them to develop solutions that create social value.

(3) *Improvisation* is linked to *co-participation*, because SEOs are able to involve members of the local community in their decision-making processes and governance. This process of active participation and dialogue is made possible by the presence of *generative leadership*, involving different stakeholders at different levels in SEOs missions and activities.

(4) *Social value creation* is linked to *socially-oriented activities*, because SEOs are involved in activities that deliver benefit to the local community. These activities aim to create social impact assessment systems.

(5) *Stakeholder participation* is linked to *social relationships*, because SEOs build strategic partnerships to pursue their social missions. Business angels, venture capitalists, crowdfunding donors, investors and other partners are essential for the functioning of SEOs. These networks are based on an *empowerment* process, powerful sharing of the mission and intrinsic motivation among all those actors involved, which allow SEOs to grow.

(6) *Persuasion* is linked to *grassroots involvement*, because most of the SEOs studied had originally been set up by individuals who were members of the local community. Persuasion mechanisms are also used to engage shareholders, who generate social and environmental impact through the *management of surplus*, using financial surpluses in institutional activities, often as a statutory obligation.

In conclusion, in light of these insights, we propose an integrated conceptual framework that draws links between the constitutive constructs of social bricolage, the strategies of business model innovation and the four social dimensions. Figure 1 shows our diamond model showing these correlations.

The relationships illustrated in the diamond allows us to assert that the innovation cultural SEOs implement in their business model goes towards a social business model innovation (Spiess-Knafl *et al.*, 2015) in which social bricolage intrinsically takes place.

The wide adoption of bricolage is strictly related to ventures' ability to create social innovation (Gundry *et al.*, 2011b), for developing novel approaches, attracting and use relevant resources, identifying markets in need and offering relevant products and services.
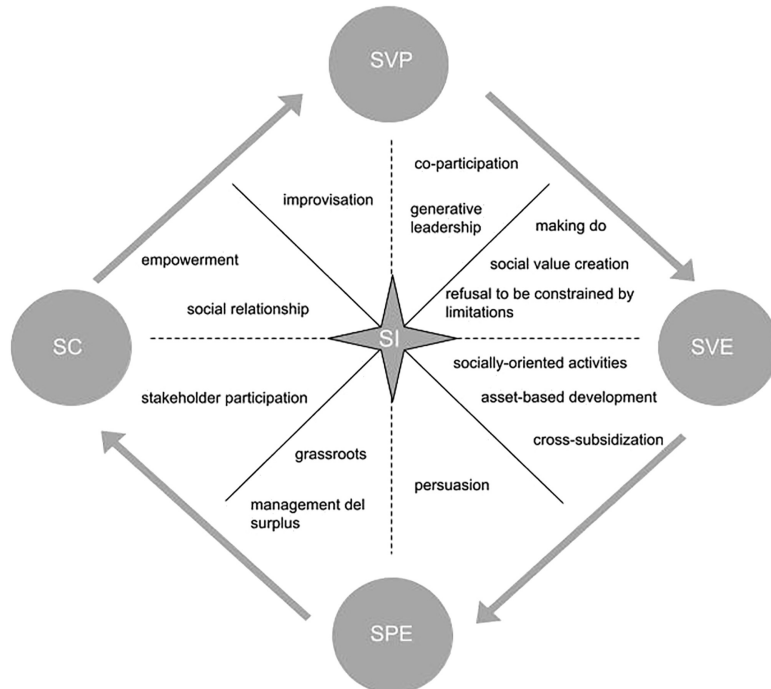

Figure 1.
SEO diamond model

Notes: SC: start-up capital; SPE: social profit equation; SVE: social value equation; SVP: social value proposition

With this line of thinking we argue that the entrepreneurial mindset of these ventures drives the process of social value creation, using opportunity definition, leverage of resources and organizational building (Morris *et al.*, 2021; Dorado, 2006).

Our findings are coherent with the studies of Canestrino *et al.* (2019), Gustafsson and Lazzaro (2021), and Stanojev and Gustafsson (2021) in the contextualization of business model innovation in the cultural field. In particular, these findings by our conceptual framework confirm the European Commission's policy that acknowledges a need of a more participative approach in the safeguarding and management of cultural heritage "*through the adoption of new models that engage local communities, as for example in the social economy, and a wide range of stakeholders, through open, participatory and inclusive processes*" (European Commission, 2019, p. 12). To address this challenge, cultural firms have a crucial role in "*fostering social innovation by reinforcing the role of civil society in cultural heritage governance*" (European Commission, 2019, p. 12).

6. Conclusions, limitations and future directions
Our article aimed to provide new insights about social bricolage and business model innovation among cultural SEOs, especially when adaptability, improvisation and resilience are more important than structural efficiency (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Baker *et al.*, 2003; Zollo *et al.*, 2018). Through our empirical analysis, using the combination of comparative case studies and narrative analysis, we developed a conceptual framework explaining that cultural ventures and the peculiar SEOs, using social bricolage, innovate their business models bringing out various components which make up a social business model innovation (Spiess-Knafl *et al.*, 2015). This alternative and reinvented business model is able to create social innovation. We find consistency of this statement in other studies in creative and cultural contexts (e.g. Pearse and Peterlin, 2019; Gustafsson and Lazzaro, 2021) where the adopted innovative business model incorporates elements of sustainability and social innovation.

The recovery and enhancement of the artistic and the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood represents the main actions implemented by the analysed cultural SEOs to pursue their social aims. In doing so, both tangible and intangible resources, as well as the support provided by different key partners, have been crucial to the success of the businesses.

Our research underlines the relevance of business model innovation as one means to support growth and competitiveness of ventures in cultural context along different phases of the life-cycle, especially for overcoming industry specificities and managerial challenges. In this sense, Italian cultural SEOs are increasingly considered as an arena for encouraging social inclusion, fostering job creation and therefore contributing to economic wealth.

Moreover, we offer a conceptualization of the social components of new business model in minor cultural heritage entrepreneurship and management for the creation of social innovation. Previous studies left underexplored how bricolage can be implemented to allow SEOs' innovative use of their resources and how they can adopt bricolage as a long-term strategy to optimize the use and mobilization of their resources and to maintain creative use of resources.

We found that investment in the entrepreneurial process of cultural heritage has social returns that strongly contribute to economic growth and the creation of new jobs. SEOs are important in the development of areas like Southern Italy. These are not considered to be either bottom-of-the-pyramid or developing markets, but have important social implications. The dimensions, activities, relational routes and processes of birth and consolidation vary between SEOs and regional, industry and business contexts, but all of them generate innovative social and organizational responses, which leverage their proximity to

communities. This occurs when cultural SEOs are able to apply specific innovative strategies in order to reinvent their business model.

Our cases were limited and circumscribed, but also powerful examples of widespread social entrepreneurship with a significant public function.

Cooperatives, associations, foundations and other third sector ventures falling under the umbrella of social entrepreneurship are all economic actors. Our cases were often developing increasingly significant entrepreneurial activities thanks to their ability to enhance spaces, places and relations. This is important in an area like Southern Italy, which needs to change quickly to generate employment and respond to the social vulnerability (Dovis and Saraceno, 2011) that has expanded further during the pandemic.

Cultural SEOs are therefore a new type of social innovators. They operate as "bricoleurs", adopting frugal solutions on a lean budget with limited capital and using their own resources (Komatsu *et al.*, 2016). The cross-fertilization of social experiments that results from alternative business models has allowed the cultural ventures to adopt new ideas, strengthen social ties and envisage embedded solutions within a variety of networks. As social innovators, they go beyond the boundaries of the existing models, organizations and networks, mutually reinforcing their value propositions and business models.

According to Landoni *et al.* (2020), cultural SEOs can overcome resource constraints through business model innovation and therefore 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 third sector is a real and concrete development tool in Southern Italy. Third sector organizations have activated paths of self-development in social contexts where no other option was available.

We aimed to contribute to the academic debate by offering new directions for integrating existing work on social bricolage, business model innovation and social innovation. First, we have extended the concept of social bricolage in social entrepreneurship, highlighting specific strategies for business model innovation. These strategies can create social value and offer a social business model that can be leveraged by ventures in combining social and economic value. Second, we have provided reflections on new and commonly used business models in minor cultural heritage. This helps to overcome the inefficiency of traditional organizational models and respond to a social need. A crucial tenet of our reasoning is that the minor cultural heritage consumption need is hard to meet through traditional business models, which are threatened by socio-economic crises and related public spending cuts, and the failure of traditional public, private and philanthropic models (Consiglio and Riitano, 2015).

Third, we also explored social bricolage in a contextualized setting, focussing on SEOs in Southern Italy and embedded in a specific cultural field, minor cultural heritage. In examining their social components, we shed light on an understudied topic and aimed to extend and enrich the literature on the theme. We highlighted these ventures' ability to provide effective business models and respond to the minor and abandoned cultural heritage issue in Italy and Europe.

In fact, if cultural SEOs lost the main peculiarities of the social bricolage approach in their development phase, they would miss their own identity and their mission, "*the enthusiasm and the wish to change things, (. . .) and the ability to provide for responses to the local needs were identified as key factors in the successful creation of social value*" (Canestrini *et al.*, 2019, p. 2206). Moreover, they would experience negative consequences in terms of sustainability and the reinforcing of their local communities. In other words, if cultural SEOs lose their "bricoleur soul", they are no longer able to generate social innovation.

From an entrepreneurship lens, this study will help small cultural ventures to rethink their strategies in line with skills development and respond to the challenges of economic and social change. Secondly, our findings can guide cultural social entrepreneurs in adopting the

appropriate business model according to the highlighted innovation strategies that preserve the essence of the origins based on the social bricolage.

The decreases in public funding, the challenges of globalization, the opportunities of digital transformation, the increasing empowerment of audiences have pushed the cultural and creative sectors to test new approaches and to necessarily explore new organizational models (European Commission – European Expert Networkon Culture, 2015).

The main practical implication is in offering new options for incorporating social dimensions and activities into SEOs' business models. Designing business model is a process embedded in a larger strategy that starts with venture's mission and vision. In the long term, business model is the crucial framework for finding, at the same time, a way to unlock value for the venture while delivering value to beneficiaries and capturing value for the sustainability of the activities (European Commission – European Expert Networkon Culture, 2015; Sonkoly and Vahtikari, 2018). Cultural firms are fundamental resource for creativity and social innovation to flourish in a new entrepreneurial culture, where the economic success is not the main goal for sustaining social business (European Commission, 2012, 2019).

In the European agenda, there is a call for a deeper understanding of the role of adaptive reuse of cultural heritage in circular economy and to develop new governance and business models as well as regional and local strategies for a social use of the cultural heritage (European Commission, 2012, 2019; Stanojev and Gustafsson, 2021).

This study, highlighting routines and processes used by SEOs, provides a starting point for social entrepreneurs and innovators in the complex and often still uncertain cultural domain of the third sector in Italy. Until recent years, the *leitmotif* in the Italian cultural domain was that economic and financial resources could only be invested in the entrepreneurial process and management of cultural heritage when there was a surplus, which meant during periods of steady economic growth. Culture was therefore seen as something subsidiary in the Italian economy. Our cases showed that culture and heritage in the third sector is a powerful engine supporting the regeneration of social environments. It can play a crucial role in activating economic processes capable of positively affecting and regenerating communities.

As a result of changes in economic and social context, culture itself is often an object of change, both as a "culture that changes the context" and a "culture that changes itself".

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. In this sense, it is recommended that policymakers and decision-makers encouraging and recognising SEOs' activities, should not only focus on financial support, certainly necessary and essential, but also identify the gaps of intervention to develop organizational responses that can meet their long-term challenges.

The study had some limitations, which open up avenues for future research. First, we analysed cultural SEOs in Southern Italy, which is currently experiencing a relatively strong cultural, social and economic crisis. This may have biased some results. Future research could investigate other cultural contexts (such as the centre and north of Italy and other European countries, considering the differences between third sector systems) to shed light on comparisons and/or contrasts with our analysis. Second, we used a "snapshot" approach, interviewing individuals at one point in time. A longitudinal approach, following cultural ventures over an extended period of time, may offer additional insights into the dynamic processes underlying business model innovation and the use of social bricolage, and showing whether these ventures can create social innovation in the long term. It would be interesting

to monitor these ventures to assess their performance and understand the potential margins of growth and risk, in terms of social and economic sustainability and scaling up.

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