



## The Story of Emilia Romagna, Italy

How small, locally owned enterprises and cooperatives have helped this region achieve among the highest GDPs per person in Europe.

....but you've never even heard of Emilia Romagna?

To see, sometimes we have to open the thick doors of the prevailing worldview and peer inside.

Photography: Richard Rowe

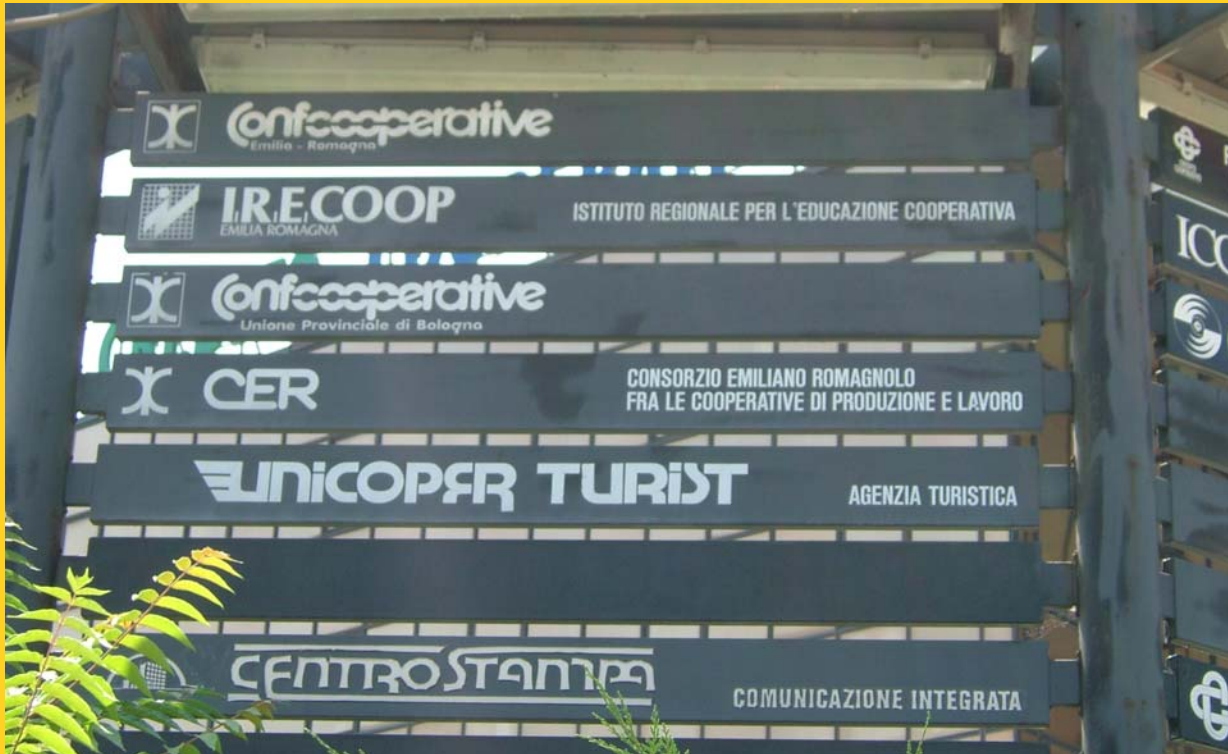
**Emilia Romagna is home to almost four million people and supports roughly three times as many manufacturing firms as does New York City, whose population is twice as large. Among its enterprises are 8,000 cooperatives.**



**Bologna, near the university**

Italy's cooperatives began over 100 years ago but were destroyed or taken over by the Fascists in the 1920s. The 1940s saw a tremendous rebirth. Cooperatives serving consumers, farmers and workers were created to rebuild the economy of war torn Italy. Co-op Ansaloni, for example, was founded to rebuild housing in Bologna bombed in the war.





From humble beginnings, the region's allied cooperative movements have, clearly, "gone to scale."

Here are just some of their Bologna headquarters.

In Italy, two philosophic currents have co-mingled that are often assumed to be opposed -- Socialism and Catholicism.



Antonio Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini and died under guard. His philosophy and writings were a major influence on the post-war Left.



Pope John XXIII's 1961 encyclical laid out the Catholic philosophy on cooperatives & their role in strengthening family & community.

Both traditions honor labor and value cooperatives and community. Nationally they've given birth to two separate alliances of cooperatives. Of the four million people in Emilia Romagna, the "Red" (Leftist) Lega Co-op boasts one million members and the "White" (Catholic) ConfCoop has over a quarter million members. Today, the philosophical differences have narrowed and collaboration has increased.



Brand new coop housing for the elderly.

Since 1945 the housing cooperatives affiliated just with LegaCoop have built 50,000 units in Emilia Romagna. In 1991, many social services -- including care for the elderly and disabled -- were transferred from the government to cooperatives. In Bologna, 85 percent of social services, called "relational goods," are now offered by coops.



**Co-op Italia, Italy's largest food retailer, is based in Emilia Romagna and controlled by 155 regional cooperatives serving 6 million members throughout Italy. Separate Co-op label programs emphasize products that are fairly traded, organic, environmentally safe and sustainably produced - as in the following examples:**



# Coop bio-logical (organic)

bio-logici

coop

**Just good and safe,  
as nature wills**

- With this line, Coop keeps on and improves its commitment to organic products, guaranteeing safety and flavour

- Range: breakfast, lunch & dinner, snacks, seasonings and basic ingredients, seeds, baby products

- Target: “more and more undifferentiated”, young, family with little babies, attention to environment, nutrition and safety issues

cereali  
al cacao  
da agricoltura biologica

bio-logici

coop

coop



# Coop solidal

solidal



coop



## To help in real terms the South of the world

The Solidal range confirms Coop's commitment to ethics

- Range: fair trade certified products, based on raw materials from the South of the world, coffee, chocolate, cocoa, tea, honey, orange juice, organic bananas, balls
- Target: "young and committed"

coop

# Coop Eco-logical

eco-logici

coop



## To protect the environment today and live better tomorrow

- The eco-logical range confirms Coop's commitment to environment protection, with the development of private label products of low environmental impact
- Range: among the most significant products indicated by the EU Regulation on Ecolabel, the European label which certifies the low environmental impact of a product throughout the supply chain
- Target: "young, sensitive, committed"

When many think of Bologna,  
they first think of food...



...not coops. But the two are closely linked.



**Over 500 cheese-making dairies dot Emilia Romagna. Most are cooperatives.**

**All coops contribute three percent of their profits to a national fund providing credit and other services to the coop movement.**

**Here...a 20 kilo round of the region's prized Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.**

**It's 8 a.m. at the Nuova Martignana coop near Bologna. In 12 copper-lined tubs, cooperators are mixing new milk with what's been fermenting.**





The cheese must cure for a couple of years before it's ready. In this cool room we saw thousands of rounds of Parmigiano Reggiano.





**Among the cooperative networks are thousands of farmers producing for local markets. Through a regional service center, all types of coops create reciprocal ties, helping each other in product development, financing, and marketing.**









The University of Bologna  
is Europe's oldest university.

Here we sought out  
Professor Stefano  
Zamagni, whom one  
coop leader called  
“our prophet.”



**“Labor is an occasion for self-realization, not a mere factor of production.”**

**Stefano  
Zamagni**

**Professor Zamagni is director of the Center for Co-operative & Civil Economics. Over a decade, the Center has graduated 250 students. With him is Frances Moore Lappé.**



**These graduate students are learning how to create economies in which markets serve worker and community well-being.**



Local “living democracies” exist in more than our imaginations...

Let’s seek new ways to learn from others’ experience and to tell our stories.

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by Frances Moore Lappé (Jossey Bass, 2006)

Most Americans say we're headed in the wrong direction. But the crisis isn't George Bush; it's Thin Democracy -- the dangerous idea that elections plus a market economy are enough. Lappé cracks open this myth. With surprising stories and startling facts, she uncovers Living Democracy emerging.

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OUR COUNTRY BY  
REBUILDING DEMOCRACY  
TO LIVE  
FRANCES MOORE LAPPE

"Poetic and passionate, Lappé holds a torch high for the rest of us"