

# Building the Italian Economy: A Proposal for the Renaissance of the Italian Municipalities

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## Abstract

This paper presents a proposal for the Italian municipalities (the comuni) to revitalize their local economies by independently initiating reconstruction of selected historical sites. The proposal explains the need for this unique approach, and describes, in a stepwise process, how it could be achieved. The research question is how to reinvent Italy's economy by invigorating its cultural heritage. This proposal outlines a practical strategy for building the Italian economy by putting Italians back to work in a way that honors the Italian culture. Real-world examples are used as evidence gathered from the relevant literature (namely, books, journal articles, and research theses) to support the proposal. Implications of taking this approach could result in more Italian people gaining employment and prosperity, leading to wealth and social happiness for the nation.

## Keywords

Italian Economy, Municipalities, Cultural Heritage, Historical Structures, Tourism

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## 1. Introduction

First, do not only rely on Nobel economists and other economic “experts” because they typically use intangible and unrealistic “top-down” statistical theories that focus only on large-scale economics. In other words, they rarely understand and almost invariably ignore the average person and the practical needs and concerns of real people who need jobs. And if their theories work, why has the Italian economy been so weak for more than two decades? By contrast, the authors of this proposal are not economists, but, rather, are both Italian citizens who have worked real jobs that required manual labor, and thus know the harsh

realities of hard work. Yet, both also received good educations and have lived and worked in several countries, some with economies that are strong as well as in countries with economies that are weak. Thus, we think we have a good understanding of what makes the difference between prospering and declining economies, and how they affect the average citizen. Therefore, we wrote this proposal in an effort to help the Italian economy become strong.

Hence, the research question is how to reinvent Italy's economy, and do it by invigorating its cultural heritage. Thus, this proposal outlines a strategy for building the Italian economy, not just in theory, but in practice, to get Italians back to work and to be proud of Italy and its culture. This is not a theory paper, so we will not bore the reader with history lessons or long theoretical discussions. Rather, this is a practical plan that describes what needs to be done and what can be done in a hands-on, step-by-step, "bottom-up" approach. The specific steps are described in the proposal section of this paper.

## 2. Methodology

As this article is a conceptual proposal, rather than an empirical test of a set of hypotheses, the method employed in this paper primarily uses real-world examples for its evidence. Therefore, relevant literature in several forms and various sources, particularly books and journal articles from appropriate disciplines, as well as research theses and documents from internet sites, are cited to support the ideas that are proposed.

## 3. Background on Rebuilding Historical Structures

For clarity, cultural heritage means "the artifacts and characteristics of a group or society that were inherited from previous generations that include 'tangible' (physical) components, e.g., art, books, buildings, and monuments, as well as 'intangible' (non-physical) elements, e.g., legends, myths, and songs" (derived from [Blake, 2014](#)). This paper focuses on, and is therefore limited to the tangible components, particularly buildings and monuments, and maintaining those types of cultural heritage is a generally accepted idea.

Before presenting the proposal one must ask if this has ever been done, or could be done. To answer those questions, the Venice Charter of 1964 of the International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, dealt with this concern in considerable detail, even describing how it should be done ([ICOMOS, 1964](#)). Since then, the idea of maintaining a country's cultural heritage and *restoring* cultural sites has been discussed by several authors (for examples, see [Baker & Chitty, 2013](#); [Orbashi & Woodward, 2009](#)). The best-known argument in favor of maintaining heritage sites is UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention ([Labadi, 2014](#)), and its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage ([Blake, 2014](#)).

There are also several examples of reconstructed buildings and monuments that may further serve to alleviate doubts about whether such endeavors can be

done successfully. The most prominent example is the reconstruction of the Greek Parthenon, the idea for which was initiated in 1975, and began to seek funding in 1983, after which gradual restoration efforts began. The fact that reconstruction is still ongoing after three decades is due to some complications that are unique to the Parthenon, especially as many pieces of the marble structure had been removed by foreign authorities and taken to museums in other countries that have been reluctant to return them to Greece (e.g., [Talks held on Elgin Marbles, 2007](#)). But much of the structure has been restored, with hope that it will be completed in 2020 ([Acropolis Restorers to Bolster West Side of Parthenon, 2016](#)).

Another example is in Germany, namely, the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady, built ca. 1730) in Dresden, Germany, which was destroyed during WW2 bombing in 1945. Despite objections to rebuilding it by East German socialists because they wanted to keep it to depict memories of the war (see [Moshenska, 2015](#); [Vees-Gulani, 2005](#)), reconstruction of the church began in 1994 (after the reunification of Germany) and was finally rebuilt and reopened in 2005 because of the determination of the local people.

Additional examples can be found in Japan, which has been troubled for many centuries by natural disasters and war that resulted in the destruction of many of that country's heritage sites. [Young and Young \(2012\)](#) discussed several options that the Japanese have used to save, as well as rebuild, monuments and sites that have been destroyed. These are "regular renewal" (making a copy of the damaged building and then tearing down the original), preservation, restoration, and reconstruction, which is the replacement of buildings that no longer exist. An example of that is the Yakushiji Temple in Nara, which had been completely destroyed centuries earlier; in 1967, a very old document that described the temple was found, and after nine years of work, the Main Hall of the temple was built upon the same site.

One of the best documented examples is the successful reconstruction of the historic Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem from 1967 to 1975. [Slae, Kark, and Shoval \(2012\)](#) gave a thorough description of many considerations, including "the interaction between 'top-down' national and municipal planning ... on historical and geographical factors affecting restoration" and noted the important influence that the local people had in making the project work, namely, "Public opinion, individual initiatives, and response to immediate needs were more decisive in determining the character of the reconstruction than much of the planning" (p. 369). Clearly, the local people were very important to the success of the reconstruction project.

One further concern should also be addressed, which is whether such endeavors could benefit the local economies. This was answered as early as 1934, during the Great Depression, when the Canadian government passed the Public Works Construction Act with the idea that reconstruction projects "would create jobs and could generate tourism, thereby reinvigorating economically depressed areas" ([Canada's Historic Places, 2018](#)).

#### 4. A Proposal for the Renaissance of the Italian Municipalities

This proposal is presented in eight “Steps” that are designed to strengthen both the Italian cultural heritage and its economic status via reconstruction of locally selected ancient historical sites. However, the idea of reconstructing ruined buildings or monuments has had its critics, who doubt whether the Italian people desire to undertake the projects even if they have the skills to do the work, if the national government would finance or allow it, if the people who run the local comuni could be trusted, and if certain nefarious organizations would take control of the needed funds. Therefore, it is necessary to address those concerns. Those worries are all resolved in the descriptions of the Steps that follow.

**Step 1: Decide to Be Strong.** The first step takes place in the minds of the Italian people. We must make the decision that the people of Italy can, must, and will make Italy’s economy strong. It is easy to say “I am only one person, so I cannot do anything because all the power is in the hands of other people.” But as long as the average citizens think that way, the situation will not change; which means that some prosperous people will continue to become wealthier while the average citizens remain financially suppressed by the poor economy.

The Italian people must know that this can be changed, and need to make the decision to change this situation. To decide to be strong is to decide to go to work. The decision to do something positive about the economic state of affairs depends, in part, on understanding the economic situation. That is Step 2.

**Step 2: Understand the Situation.** The situation is, actually, remarkably simple. Economists, unfortunately, have complicated the situation with dozens of theories and hundreds of textbooks that confuse the important basic points. In reality, there is only one essential factor that makes an economy strong: And that factor is Jobs! It is that simple! And it can be understood very easily. When people have jobs, they are making money. Some of that money is spent on rent and utilities, and to buy food. Food is purchased in stores and restaurants, so people who have jobs will go to the stores to buy the goods they want, and many will also go to restaurants to eat.

Thus, when people have jobs, stores need to hire people to sell their goods, and restaurants need to hire people to be waiters, waitresses, dishwashers, cooks, delivery truck drivers, clerks, and to do many other related jobs. And that means more people will have jobs, and *those people* will also start to buy things in stores and go to restaurants. And that, in turn, increases sales, which helps the farms and factories. Thus, the farms and factories will need to hire more people to handle the produce and make the products that more people are buying. Hence, increasing jobs for one set of people not only helps those people, but they, in turn, help other people to get jobs. This simple fact of increasing jobs is the basis for any economy to improve and grow.

When people lose their jobs, the opposite happens. They must use their sav-

ings to pay the rent and utilities, but they will reduce their spending on all goods, even food, and stop going to restaurants. As fewer people go out to dine, the restaurants will not need so many workers, so they will fire waiters, waitresses, cooks, and other employees. As those workers who are fired are added to the number of unemployed people, they will also reduce their spending and buy fewer products. The stores continue to lose money, and fire more employees. This leads to a downward spiral in which there are more and more unemployed people. Thus, more companies go bankrupt, which results in a depressed economy.

While it would help the people if governments would set reasonable upper limits on rents, food prices, and taxes, they rarely do this. Nonetheless, the one critical factor that makes any economy robust is the availability of jobs. Therefore, we must ask where the jobs will come from. There is a way to create jobs, and the process is well-suited to Italy's situation today. The answer to that question is in Step 3.

**Step 3: The Process of Job Creation.** This proposal argues that the process of job creation starts with the Italian people, not the national government. Except for the time when US President Franklin Roosevelt created jobs to counteract the Great Depression of 1929, most governments have always been reluctant to use their financial reserves to create jobs for the people in their countries; and most governments do not have ideas for creating jobs, nor do they have knowledge of how to proceed. In most countries, governments expect businesses to create jobs, but the owners of those businesses also lack the desire to use their profits to create jobs because they lack the vision to see how using profits to create jobs could benefit them. Maybe they forgot the important lesson of social responsibility, namely, giving people jobs starts an upward spiral of economic prosperity that increases the number of people with jobs, thus increasing their incomes. And those people will use their income to purchase products; including products made by the companies that donate money to create jobs (explained in Step 2). Therefore, job creation is a "must," and if national governments and big businesses are reluctant or unable to do this, then the jobs must be, and can be, created at the local level; albeit in another way.

We start by asking what jobs to create. Then we can discuss how to create those jobs. Allow us to first provide the logic that readers of this proposal may wish to know because a simple list of jobs might not seem to have an obvious rationale. Let us begin with the fact that Italy has had a long history of grandeur. As early as the foundation of Rome, people from many other nations, near and far, have desired to visit Rome, and when they arrived, they were hugely impressed by the greatness and wonder of the inspiring buildings, such as the Coliseum, as well as the many great temples, churches, roadways, malls, fountains, sculptures, and other very remarkable structures, such as the great Roman aqueduct.

Please understand that this is about Italian culture, which we define as the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors shared by the Italian people. The "behaviors" are the various things that people do. And regarding culture that includes

creating art, music, etc., especially making structures that are based in the shared values and beliefs of the people. Italian culture has more than 2000 years of history, so the historical greatness of Italy and the Italian culture should not be obscured or lost by neglect.

Italy, with its beautiful structures, provided great attractions that have been revered by millions of people from all over the world for millennia; and today tourism remains a significant source of revenue (*Italy Tourism Revenues 1995-2018, 2018*). But in 2013, after hiring a foreign consulting firm, the Italian government initiated the National Tourism Development Plan to try to make tourism a major source of revenue. But that plan fell short. The main suggestion made by the foreign advisors was to give more money to the Ministry of Tourism to attract more tourists. They advised the government to give large amounts of funding to other ministries, and undertake major initiatives, such as nationwide modernization of hotels and the transport infrastructure (*Angeloni, 2013*). Although, those actions would help any economy, they are too large-scale and too complex for the government to afford. The consultants also suggested focusing help on the few cities that already attract most tourists, and thereby they ignored the fact that it is not only those few world-famous cities in Italy that need to be economically strengthened.

In reality, all of Italy requires the creation of jobs. Therefore, what we are proposing is a plan for creating actual jobs. Specifically, the renewed building of the great Italian structures will provide work for the Italian people, and this will also lay the foundation for creating more jobs of many kinds.

At this point, it is extremely important to stress that this plan should take place at the *local level*. In other words, it is *not* suggested as a plan for the national government! There are two basic reasons for this (as will become obvious in the remainder of this proposal). The first reason is that the national government, and corporations, cannot create the jobs on a country-wide scale because creating so many jobs at the national level would be too expensive for the national government, or for any corporation.

The second reason is that asking the national government, or businesses, to manage the projects will take control of the projects away from the local people. And when control is taken away from the people, they will not benefit from the projects because the funding could be (intentionally or unintentionally) improperly used. Another danger that could occur when control is taken away from the local people is that the jobs could be given to imported workers. And that creates two further problems, namely, the local people would not financially benefit from having the jobs, and the foreign workers would have little motivation to do good work (this is because they have no local historical connection), which could result in poor construction. Thus, by allowing anyone to take control away from the local people, the overall result would be that the local economy would not benefit.

Therefore, the projects must be managed by the people who live in each comune. Furthermore, there is another advantage to having local people run the

projects, namely, the benefit of *transparency*! There is a mandate in Italy (namely, the 3rd Action Plan) that requires greater transparency (openness, visibility) regarding financial and other activities of government administrations, including the comuni (*Open Government in Italy, 2018*). For example, Italy's 3rd Action Plan for open government states that it will also be implemented "at local level with the involvement of regional and municipal administrations ... the action plan contains the commitments of administrations other than central ones. This makes the plan a country-wide initiative, ensuring that open government is recognized and perceived by citizens at local level too."

Interestingly, the comuni has an advantage over the national government because most comuni are relatively small. That is, any improper management of the projects, or mishandling of funds, will be detected immediately by the local people. Furthermore, if any misconduct is discovered, the local people of each comune could remove the official, and/or demand recall elections to replace such persons.

Returning to the question of what jobs to create, note that the jobs will not only be in construction. Those jobs, of course, will be essential because they form the basis for the anticipated upward spiraling of the national economy. While the specific jobs that are related to this plan are mentioned later in this proposal, it must be clearly and emphatically stressed that as many of the relevant jobs as possible should be allocated to the residents of the comuni, i.e., locally, where the construction projects are to be executed.

Accordingly, improving the greatness of Italy can be initiated at the community level. In other words, the jobs need to be created at the local level of the Italian comuni. How can the Jobs be created? In particular, comuni provide many basic civil functions, including contracting for local roads, public works, and other related projects, which means that comuni can allocate some funds for such projects. And this forms the basis for the part of the plan that involves job creation.

**Step 4: The Work of the Structures.** The suggestion to build classical structures is a deep cultural concern, and there are workable solutions, which raises some questions that can now be answered. First, are there enough structures for this plan to work across the entire nation? In fact, there is a multitude of historical sites all over Italy. As evidence, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee listed Italy as the country with the highest number of such sites, with 54 (China has the second most, with 53), and the Italian government listed an additional 40 sites (*UNESCO, 2018*). Those are examples of cultural heritage sites, some of which have already been restructured. Therefore, the ones listed as "national" sites might not be sites that would be included in lists for the comuni.

Yet, there are numerous other structures that can be found all over Italy. Generally, each comune is likely to have at least one site of historical significance. Of course, whereas there are nearly 8000 comuni, there are too many to name here, but two examples may suffice; these are not included in the World Heritage list or in the Italian government's list: One example is Abbasanta

(which has the nuraghe of Losa, in Sardinia) and another example is Zugliano (which has the Church of San Biagio, in Veneto). This is not to suggest that those structures should be the ones that ought to be newly built, but they are only mentioned to emphasize that there are many structures (from A to Z) all around Italy.

This raises the question of which structures to choose. If there are several structures in one comune, the people of that comune might decide to select only one. For example, if the structure is still in excellent condition, it would not be selected for new construction. And if there are several structures, the local people might prioritize them, e.g., to first work on the most preferred one, and save the others for a later time. In any case, such questions can only be answered by the people who live in each comune.

Another concern would be where to construct the buildings. This raises some other important questions. For example, how much of the ancient structure exists (e.g., there are churches that have been partly destroyed in earthquakes and wars), and what should be done with the existing materials? There are two possibilities: One method that was used in the past was to keep the original foundation and build directly upon it, but when that method is used, one can see the foundation stones at the bottom, and a clearly visible demarcation where the newer stones were added. While it is laudable to try to keep the original stones, there is a drawback from an aesthetic point of view, namely, the changes in the nature and quality of the materials do not make the structures look as beautiful as the originals. Also, some recent Italian laws might forbid disturbing the original remains.

The alternate method is to build the structures anew! Imagine how beautiful the original structures appeared when they were first built. The beauty of the original structures is the reason this method is recommended. Of course, other questions arise, so they should also be asked. First consider the sites of the physical construction. Should the new building be constructed on the same historical site? If no laws forbid building over them, it would be historically accurate to construct on the exact same site, but that would be tried only if the original structure had been completely destroyed, or if only a few stones remain.

If the original structures have completely disappeared, the exact historical site would be the best location, unless the underlying ground can no longer support the structure. But if the ground lends strong support, the existing site could be used; and any original stones or artifacts that are found could be located in a museum (which exists or could be built nearby). If the ruins still have many parts of the structure remaining, those structures may be kept in place as a historical reminder of their origins; and the new structures can be built nearby. Of course, the exact location would be decided by the people of the local comune.

The next question involves the new structures' design. First, the original architectural designs should be found. If they exist in museums, they can be obtained there. These would be evaluated for their structural integrity regarding whether they meet the requirements for modern construction. If they do exist,

the original plans can be used to build the new version of those structures. If not, the original designs should be preserved as far as possible, with necessary additions (but these should preferably be minor, e.g., reinforcements placed internally, where they will not be visible) to improve the physical integrity of the structures. If original plans do not exist, surveyors could study the geographical layout of the original structures, which can be evaluated by architects who would draw the plans.

The next question is about the type of stones, or other materials, that should be used. The original materials obtained from the structure's remains need to be examined from historical records as well as from mineralogical analyses. For example, if they were marble, the type and origin of the marble would need to be determined in order to use the same type of materials (if desired by the comune). Alternately, certain types of stones were sometimes used only because they were locally available and easy to exploit. Thus, the original materials might not be of the best quality; and the comune would need to decide whether to use that type of stone or other stones of higher quality (such as marble), which may be more beautiful (but more expensive). Then, based on the up-dated architectural layout of the plans, sufficient materials from a suitable source could be obtained and brought to the new location.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it is clear that many types of work will be involved to carry out each of the building projects; from analysis of the historical structures to the actual construction of the new buildings. And it must be stated again that as many jobs as possible must be allocated to the *local residents* of each comune. This would involve job training for many citizens, which is explained in Step 5.

**Step 5: Job Training.** Whereas many new jobs will be created, there will be a need to train or retrain people to do those jobs. And whereas the basis of the plan is to erect buildings in each territory, the majority of the jobs should be in the territory of the comune. Construction and related jobs would be essential, but these are not the only jobs. Some other types of initial work will be needed, for example, in the areas of historical research, geological analysis, architecture, planning, surveying, and other areas related to doing the necessary background work before the actual construction takes place. Any local people who already possess those skills could be employed early in the process, and if more people are needed, they could receive training at local Italian schools and colleges.

Also, while the background work is being conducted, the many construction workers who will be needed should be trained. The skills needed for construction work are basic ones that can be learned in Italy's existing technical training schools. These construction jobs include masons, carpenters, crane operators, truck drivers, forklift operators, and many other such workers. If more schools are needed, training centers may be added. Also, experienced older, or retired, construction workers (who might no longer be able to do the physical labor) could be employed by the training schools to share their experience and expertise with the new, younger workers. Additionally, any comune (whether it has

historical sites or not) could start training programs for construction workers. It is also very important for the schools to ensure that the costs to learn those jobs are affordable. In addition to construction workers, there will also be a need for other workers, namely, sculptors and artists, who will be responsible for the classical art that beautifies the structures.

Then, soon after the projects are initiated, and while they are in progress, there will also be a need for people who have skills to handle the increased tourism. That is, building new versions of the ancient classical structures is, in itself, a historical phenomenon. Thus, tourists may be brought to the construction sites to witness history as it is being made. And, for a long time after the structures are completed, the great buildings that result from the projects will be sites where tourist can be brought to see the marvelous new structures.

**Step 6: Financing.** Of course, money will be needed to accomplish this plan, so it is logical to ask where the money will come from. If this were a national plan, the cost to the national government would be enormous, creating doubts about whether the plan could be financed. And if such funds were available to the national government, there would be doubts about whether the money would ever reach the comuni and the people who are supposed to benefit from this plan. But the advantage of this proposal, which is centered in the comuni, is that it is a “bottom-up” plan, namely, the funding would be arranged by the comuni, not by the national government.

In fact, by spreading the cost over the 8000 comuni, the amount of money needed to finance any one of the building projects would be comparatively small. To imagine this, think of the difference in the amount of money that would be needed by the national government if it had to finance the construction of 8000 buildings; as compared to the cost needed by one community to arrange the funding to construct only one building.

But a comune might not have enough expendable capital to erect one building. Therefore, how would the project be financed? The answer would depend on the type and size of each particular structure, which would also determine the type of materials needed.

For example, was the original structure that is going to be recreated made of granite or marble? If the objective is to build the structure according to its original design, a large marble structure can be very expensive. In addition to sourcing the materials (e.g., excavating or purchasing) and transporting them, there would also be the costs of architects, and construction workers. Therefore, many of the comuni would likely need financial assistance for their projects.

How can financial assistance be obtained? There are several possible sources. For example, UNESCO has a World Heritage Fund with money that is annually donated for such projects. There is also a World Monument Fund that already supports several small projects in Italy, e.g., in Venice (Felli, Brotzu, Pilone, Vendittozzi, & Caponero, 2014) and Craco (Donati, 2016). There are also well-endowed private donors and charitable foundations who, in 2015, have given US\$373 billion (€324 billion) to non-profit organizations (Sandoval, 2016).

All these sources may be approached by officials from the comuni. Another possible source might be the regioni, which sometimes help the comuni. And if there are some funds in the Ministry of Tourism, that could be a possible source to supplement comune funds. There are also large corporations that may be willing to make (tax-exempt) donations.

But there is a very important caution that must be clearly stated here! That is, the corporations must not be permitted to control the projects. This is because there have been cases in the past in which large corporations came to Italy and introduced financial demands that caused the projects to fail. Therefore, all the finances related to the building projects must always remain under the control of the people of the local comune. Thus, it is the people of the comune who must take the responsibility to manage and to decide all aspects of the project. This will include setting the prices and salaries, which must all be reasonable and acceptable to the local people.

The people must not ask corporations to manage the projects. The only role that the corporations should play would be to contribute funding. In return, their names will be publicized for their assistance and for their good will. But the project must always, and in all possible ways, be managed by the people of the comune.

How can businesses be persuaded to donate funds? To convince the corporations, the comuni officials could explain that the donations will start a process called a “virtuous circle,” which benefits both the people and corporations (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). The relationship between companies and the community is based on trust (Kamens, 1985). When a business donates some of its profits to help a community, that company is seen by citizens as being socially responsible. Thus, donating to the projects allows more people to work and earn money, which they can spend on buying products. And, when the companies become known for helping to strengthen the economy, people will have a positive image of those businesses, and buy more of their products, which increase company profits. And by having greater profits, businesses can donate more money, thus renewing the virtuous circle that continually benefits both the corporation and the Italian people.

Regarding the workers, they should also come from the comune. Keep in mind that the money for the projects should be spent within the local comune in order for the project to strengthen the local community. In particular, whenever possible, people who live in the comune and who have the needed skills must be put to work, such that the money used to pay salaries must be paid to the people of the comune. The reason for this is that building the economy is based in the idea that the *local people* must start receiving salaries in order for the project to benefit the local economy (as explained in Step 2).

**Step 7: Be Determined to Succeed.** Any time that a new plan is suggested, people will have doubts; and some have asked whether the Italian people would accept the idea of building such structures. For example, some people might want

to keep the ruins as they are. For hundreds of years, and presently, tour operators bring tourists to historical sites and say “Here are the ruins of [some once-great structure].” But whereas there are so many ruins, the impression tourists take away with them is that Italy was a “once great” nation, but that it is now “a nation in ruins.” That ignores the greatness of Italy’s history, and is not how Italy should be seen.

To make this change occur requires some mental discipline, which anyone can have if they make the decision that they want to improve their lives. It means changing one’s way of thinking from a negative to a positive mind set. And it means dismissing doubts, avoiding defeatist thinking, and overcoming reluctance to change. Therefore, before rejecting the plan because it might not match all your ideas, consider how to contribute to make the plan succeed. For example, if you are young, you can contribute by offering to work in the construction of buildings or another area where you have skill. If you are older, you could offer your skills in a relevant area mentioned in this proposal, or share your knowledge and expertise by teaching them to younger people. And when friends and neighbors cooperate they will all have success. This requires will and determination, which the Italian people certainly have when they set their minds to do something.

**Step 8: Doing It.** Fortunately, Italy has the needed organizational elements, i.e., the comuni, already in place that allow these construction projects to be initiated. There are nearly 8000 comuni; each composed of local people. According to the Italian Constitution, comuni are “autonomous entities having their own statutes, powers, and functions” (Article 114) that are legally permitted to operate independently, i.e., they have “financial autonomy with respect to revenues and expenditures” (Article 119). And the town counsels (*consiglio comunale*) are locally elected people with intimate knowledge of the situation in their comune, making them responsible to their neighbors. That encourages them to want their comune to succeed in order to improve the lives of friends, neighbors, and their own families. These conditions are ideal for operating independently and responsibly for everyone’s benefit.

In addition, the Italian Constitution guarantees that the people have the right to meet freely without seeking permission (Article 17). This means there are no obstacles to creating new Civil Society Organizations, or CSOs (*Organizzazioni della Società Civile*, OSC), no licenses are required, and there are no costs for creating them. Many CSOs exist all over Italy, and are involved in numerous social assistance and cultural activities. And, of course, the plan being suggested here is decidedly a cultural matter, and its objectives are for social assistance, namely, to improve the lives of everyone in the society. Furthermore, as a financial consideration, when the CSOs for the construction projects are created, they should be designated as “non-profit” organizations, which would make them eligible to receive donations from wealthy individuals and corporations because most such persons and organizations specify that they will contribute funds only to non-profit organizations.

## 5. Conclusion

When you see a construction crane standing tall against the sky, it is engaged in building some sort of structure, which means that people are working! As one clear example, if you visit China, which has 1.4 billion people on 9.6 million square kilometers of land, you will see countless construction cranes busily operating in every city, which is an obvious sign that their economy is prospering. There is an ancient Chinese proverb by a philosopher named Lao Tzu, which says “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” China was once one of the world’s poorest nations, but, today, China has become the largest economy in the world (Smith, 2017). How? Because it took the first step!

Is Italy willing to take that first step?

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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