

THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE RURAL POLICY STUDIES (ICRPS) SUMMERY INSTITUTE REPORT BERTINORO, ITALY

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Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

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RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

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2013 Summer Institute, Bertinoro, Italy

The 2013 Summer Institute that took place in Bertinoro, Italy, was hosted by the University of Bologna, Department of Agro-food Science and Technology (UNIBO) and the University Residential Centre of Bertinoro (CEUB). The two week summer school was comprised of both workshops and field trips that allowed students and faculty members to explore this year's topic—Agri-food systems and rural development: tradition, innovation and green governance. We explored various concepts, issues, and questions relating to this theme using Italy as a central example, which was compared to other countries such as the United States, Canada, Mexico, Norway, and other 'Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development' (OECD) countries. The journey began!!!!



This year's seminar was extra special as it marked the 10th year anniversary of ICRPS. The celebration of this 10th year anniversary focused on recognizing three deserving pioneers of this well established learning institute, including Dr. Tom Johnson (University of Missouri), Dr. Tony Fuller (University of Guelph), and Dr. John Bryden (Norwegian Agricultural Economics Research Institute) who initiated and transformed the mere concept of a school into an outstanding annual international event.



This year's workshops were presented by faculty members, academics, guest-speakers as well as by leaders and representatives from various Italian organizations. The first and second year Masters students who attended participated in seminars on rural policy and

research methods.

Dr. Bill Reimer provided participants with an introduction to some of the rural policy changes he has observed over time. Dr. John Devlin (University of Guelph) presented and discussed operationalization methodologies that include employing qualitative and quantitative techniques and data collection methods in research. We had various keynote speakers such as the Councillor of Agriculture, Gian Luca Bagnara, who provided an informative discussion on the agri-food production of the Provincia di Forli, which surrounds Bertinoro and the CEUB. Mr. Gian Luca Bagnara provided a very interesting presentation describing the immense value of the agri-food sector on the local economy, which now exceeds 750 million Euros in annual sales of wines, cheese, fruits, vegetables and other local agri-food products, in both raw and fully processed forms.

Dr. Tom Johnson (University of Missouri) introduced comparative policy with insightful discussions about what constitutes 'comparative policy', while Dr. Philomena De Lima (University of Highland and Islands) discussed social policy and research analysis methodologies that could be used to analyze issues impacting rural places in the face of an increasingly globalised world. Dr. William (Bill) Ashton (Rural Development Institute – Brandon University), on the other hand, engaged participants, both students and faculty,

in ‘active learning’ exercises designed around research and data analysis methods. Another fascinating presentation was offered by Dr. Lourdes Viladomiu (University of Barcelona) who discussed the current state of European rural development and, in particular, identified the “shift from production to rural development issues.” Dr. Viladomiu emphasized the importance of the 90% involvement rate of women in the popular local cooperative movement for agri-food production and tourism.



The first ‘Field Visit’ for the ICRPS team (students, faculty, and organizers) was to Modena and to a family owned villa that specializes in the production of highly prized balsamic vinegar. At the Acetaia San Donnino production facility, the team shared an interesting and memorable experience when the 3rd generation owner proudly gave us a tour of his ancient style of producing good vinegar. The ICRPS team had a second road trip to the ancient city of Modena to tour an agri-food cooperative where the world famous Parmigiano Reggiano cheese is still made. After this fun and educating road trip, it was time to return to the workshops for more policy presentations highlighting the challenges all rural areas face in both Europe and North America.

The ICRPS team of students and faculty had a third field trip to Bologna to participate in workshops at the faculty of Agriculture, Bologna University. The workshops explored the concept of cooperatives and territorial development from three different perspectives. The presenters included Bruno Jean (Quebec), a representative from Legacoop, and another from the Alce Nero Cooperative. After these sessions on cooperatives and

contemporary policy that governs rural economies, we headed out for a tour of the Granarolo group, one of the largest players in the Italian agri-food sector. The Granarolo group is solely-owned by producers as a cooperative and produces a variety of products including milk, cream, yogurt, dairy products, dessert, and cheese.



After having an exciting tour and tasting some warm fresh, mozzarella cheese, the team headed out to La Rupe to visit a cooperative involved in food waste recovery and with a number of other centres in the rehabilitation, energy reintegration, and

recovery processes of food waste.

After this exciting field trip, the team headed to the classroom for another two sessions on policy challenges to demographic change and social structure. Dr. Philomena de Lima (University of Highlands and Islands) addressed issues on the diversity and migrations in rural areas, while Dr. Bruce Webber (Oregon State University) addressed poverty and inequality in rural areas. The sessions were highly interactive with students working closely with faculty members to identify the social changes, challenges and factors that contribute to inequality in society today.

The following day brought new adventures with a field trip to Romagna, Forli to visit a self-sustainable farm (Fattorie Faggioli) that has multi-purposes; it is an educational training farm, but is also involved in agri-tourism, as well as agricultural and energy production. Fattorie Faggioli represented a new concept of ‘applied multifunctionality in agriculture’ geared towards environment and land preservation and management while

achieving sustainable food production. After the visit to the farm, the ICRPS team was entertained with a four-course meal.



Afterwards, we headed out to visit a winery - Caviro Distillery that is located in Faenza, Ravenna province. The distillery is surrounded by a beautiful scenic view of rocky mountains on one side and valleys of grape vineyards on the other. After a fascinating tour of the winery, the team sat down for another delicious dinner served with wine produced locally at the distillery. The team enjoyed the overflow of tasty white and red wines, and by the time we were ready to go back to Bertinoro, all participants were very satisfied with the day's outcome. To remember this wonderful piece of wine heaven, the team bought back an assortment of different kinds of wine.

The following day, sadly, was uneventful for both students from Brandon University. One left to catch a return flight to Canada for work while the second student fell sick, making it impossible for both of them to participate in the day's activity.

On the final day of the institute, all the students, who at the beginning of the seminar were placed in groups, were asked to present on their collaborative research on one of the five thematic areas:

1. Social structure
2. Governance
3. Agri-food
4. Tourism
5. Sustainability and Resources



Upon finishing their presentations, the students were awarded certificates for completing the two weeks seminar in comparative policy analysis. After this final academic event, the team was hosted in the old, towering castle for a farewell

dinner. With this being our final night of the seminar, we all got together to interact with one another and create even more memories to carry back home.

With only one free day in Bertinoro, the team was given 3 options on how to spend it.

- 1) a field trip to Ravenna to visit the museum of Galla Placidia with its beautiful vaulted ceilings, the Neonian Baptistery, and the Basilica of San Vitale.
- 2) a visit to Foreste Casentineso, a large protected forested area in Romagna, or
- 3) a free option to go where participants wanted to explore for the day.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



Immaculate Nabisere



I am one of the few students who has been lucky enough to be a part of ICRPS for two years. I think it is extremely important to express my appreciation to the faculty members and the organizing committee for making my years not only great, but a wonderful learning experience. I have been nurtured, guided, advised, and trained in

research and learned a great deal about rural policies that exist in EU (Norway, Scotland, Italy, Spain, and Catalonia), United States, Mexico, and Canada. I have had such a wonderful experience; I have made lasting friendships, and, above all, connections that are very crucial for both my personal well-being and professional life. This year's discussions, presentations, and debates on issues pertaining to rural development in different parts of the world were all very enlightening; I returned to Brandon with a much clearer focus on the topics discussed in the sessions.

ICRPS 2013 in Italy would not have been successful without the coordination and tremendous effort of our host and organizing UNIBO team: Fabio De Menna, Claudia Giardino, Francesca Regoli, Matteo Vittuari, and Roberta Partisani.

While I sit in my office or even at home, my mind every now and then drifts back and reminisces on the beautiful memories that were created, the beautiful green scenery, the laughter, food, overflowing wine (even though I do not drink, I was so tempted to try it), and the field trips to Bologna, Ravenna, Modena, and Ferrara provinces.

John (Jack) Lovell



There are so many superlatives that I could convey to the UNIBO team, the warmth and generosity of the various tour hosts and the Italian people I have met. I came with no expectations or knowledge of what to expect, but what I left with was a full and memorable experience of food, wine, culture, learning and what it truly meant to live for a time in the

renowned Emilio Regiano region of Italy. I cannot say enough positives about the UNIBO team – Matteo, Claudia, Fabio, and Francesca – who went way beyond the call of duty to ensure that they gave us the best attention and consideration that was (in my opinion) possible. While fulfilling all the duties required of a tour guide they also became our friends. They were so genuine in their concern, it was indeed a humbling experience.



Although I have read much of Italy in travel books and magazines, this country is truly worth exploring. The Bologna region that includes Bertinoro really was one of the most beautiful and creative places I have ever visited. When it comes to rural tourism in

Manitoba we are mere infants, for in Italy we were shown what real tourism is all about. Our policy makers could learn a lot from similar experiences and the modes of rural development we visited.



The history, the people, and the climate all combined to create an atmosphere that was all encompassing. I felt at times that our schedule was overfull; however in retrospect, I wouldn't have wanted to miss out on anything we experienced.

I was inspired by several of the academic presenters most notably Dr. Tom Johnson who inspired me with his courage and dignity in the face of difficult personal struggles. Dr. Tony Fuller captivated me and others by his descriptive and animated manner of reaching his audience. I won't forget my discussions with him. In fact, every academic presenter brought their own unique style that just seemed to fit perfectly into the varying cultural mosaic of the group. Attending ICRPS 2013 was one of the most memorable and reflective events of my life, and a wonderfully stimulating experience I will cherish for many years to come.



From Italy