

10TH CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIOLOGY ASSOCIATION (ESA), 7TH TO 10TH SEPTEMBER
2011, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND.

“Social Relations in Turbulent Times”

Session: RN08 Disaster and Social Crisis

Sub session: 8a. Theories of Social Relations in Times of Uncertainty (II): Empirical Findings

**Sport and its stories. The central role of the youth in the construction of the social
cohesion thorough sport**

Marco Pasini, Researcher

LABOS - FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES

Viale Liegi, 14 – 00198 (Roma)

Telephone: +39 06 8543568

Fax: +39 06 85302812

E-mail : labos@fondazione-labos.org

Internet site: www.fondazione-labos.org

Abstract:

This is a project of research committed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (started July 2010, and finished in July 2011), for the reconstruction of the social fabric through sports in the secondary school of L'Aquila after the earthquake of the 6th of April 2009.

Aims:

- Promote an awareness campaign among people of different ages focusing on the importance of physical activities for the creation of strong relations and social events;
- Underline the central role of the youngest and a good use of the spare time;
- Study the effects that this project would have upon the attitudes of the participants in a context of social share.

Phases: workshops "*Sport and more*", final event "*Sport and its stories*".

Together sport activities, there will be some meetings for each sports and their purpose will be the creation of products related to the activities taken into consideration.

The production will be built through communication and representations laboratories (art, theatre, video-photography, interviews) in order to create a relation among corporeity and collective memory and an approach to competences for its active learning, social character and sense of community.

The intent of the study is to reach out how sports could modify and impact on the reconstruction of the social net and its attitudes in context of reference.

We will present the final report:

- Results attended: a good frequency (about 80%) of the activities and an increase of the relationships of the 30% circa for the subjects take into consideration;
- Monitoring and valuation instruments: questionnaire in two steps (initial and final phases) on pilot group (240 persons) and privileged and significant testimony (160), survey on empirical/qualitative data produced in laboratories (competence approach). We will allow to have a descriptive analysis of phenomenon and a comparison among who have always practice a physical activity and whom that gave up after the earthquake.

Key words: Sport as Policies, Politics and Practices of Disaster Risk Reduction

Introduction

The project was commissioned by the *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy*¹.

The project was carried out by the *National Sports Centre Libertas*², an association of social promotion born in 1945. Your reference agencies (150), associations (4.067), clubs and centres (3.626), count nearly one million members.

Labos, partner of the project, founded in 1985 with head quarters in Rome, is an agency of research active in all Country to support disadvantaged class. It is qualified in the areas of valuation of social needs and services and intervention programs. The foundation has years of experience about training, planning and valuation through its social policy studies.

Ambient context is *L'Aquila*, the town hit by the earthquake in April of 2009. The social relations are been changed by the earthquake. Some date:

Territorial context has been sensitive mutations on the pre-existing relations system. Enough to think that some numbers indicates a condition of new life made of practical difficulty: more than 52.000 persons are assisted by civil protection, of which more than 22.000 are placed in 143 reception areas and 30.000 in hotels and private homes. It has unexpected and immediate loss of material things and the primary and secondary socialization. In short, there is an everyday life to be built. Making the victims responsible about their role realizing their experiences. The earthquake may have caused:

- Accentuation of transgression / aggression;
- Dissatisfaction for the absence of public and private spaces;
- Research of the group.

¹ Fund for Associations, ex Law 7 December 2000, number 383 - Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Directive 2009.

² Precisely: G.S. Basket A.S.D L'Aquila, A.S.D. L'Etoile, Mountain Evolution, Common of city of L'Aquila, Abruzzo Region, Coni

1. Social relations after turbulent times

After every earthquake there are four phases³: pre-impact, impact, post-impact, *reconstruction*. We analyze the last phase. We have to support the community to a revision of the fact. The community feel real alone. Our action has to prod the empowerment process. In this phase our main objectives are:

- Rebuilding the social fabric and promoting their own identity;
- Support the public and private organism.

For the reconstruction we use *approach for competence*, it is a non traditional pedagogic approach that integrate the knowledge, the know-how and the transformation. It permit in front of a different situations to adapt. It involves the central and active role of the individual so to make him in a condition of research and active learning. Its social character comes from the training process inside to a society with ability of action and interpretation. Community in the meaning of common action and common learning in a specific historic and social moment.

This approach creates *empowerment* that creates social network, order and normality conditions.

At the same time *sport* creates empowerment, because it is a process of interiorization of collective norms and a model of integration and socialization. It representing active role and sense of control. Sport is a communal ritual that reinforces cohesion also for ethical-pedagogical values. the ritual of the game celebrates the sense of belonging to a community and its past experiences. Sport is capable of arousing and evoking dynamics of identity and group belonging; because it is so deeply ingrained in society which imbues it with a myriad of meanings and emotions, it is an extraordinarily fertile source and observation point for social research.

The idea was developed in consideration of “*the role of sport as a vehicle for dialogue between generations. With increasing importance of sport the exploration of its socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-economic functions becomes an ever more essential task for the Sociology. It is important that the social sciences investigates the emergence and diffusion of sport over time and across different societies; with the purpose refers to all forms of human movement*” and, in this specific case “*create or improve social and cultural relationships*”⁴.

The sociological investigation that I present here arises also from questions and considerations: can sport revitalize a in a period of social crisis? What sports are practiced? In what ways are they practiced? Why do we give special consideration to sport in urban policies for disaster risk

³ Gordon R., *Engineering aspects of disaster recovery. Local Government Guide to disaster management*, Melbourne State Government Printing Office, 1991.

⁴ www.eass-sportsociology.eu/information.

reduction? In reply to the crisis of ‘social bonds’, sport is often presented as a model of integration for young people. In this context, sport becomes social and the young people seem to be the objective of new socio-sport efforts⁵.

Concept of athletic activities to build citizenship, participation, human growth, integration and social cohesion. With particular attention to team sports that foster emotional, cognitive and relational development, and a greater comprehension/development of one’s personality. Thus, sport as the main instrument for social inclusion. Games⁶ exalt the harmony and dynamics of cooperation.

2. The project

Project period is one year, it is finished in July 2011.

Gantt diagram

Phases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Sensitization													
Sport activities													
Workshop													
Research													
Promotion													

Through the sport we intend to rebuild the social fabric of young people; boys and girls that are attending the secondary schools in L’Aquila. Young people who have decided to practice a free sport activity taken part to this project. The participants could choice among three different sports (climbing, dancing, basket). At the same time, had been organized some workshops (“*Sport and more*”) regarding the three sports categories. The three groups had produced: video-docu reality, spots, photographic reportage, books, spectacle of theatre. To realize the product the participants become: photoreporter, videomaker, director, researcher, journalist, scenographer, copywriter.

All this common activity use art, body and imagination to take out the collective memory and the sense of community. At the end of this work, it will be a final event of for days called “*The sport and its stories*”. Its intent are:

⁵ Gasparini W., *Le sport dans les quartiers*, PUF, Strasbourg 2008.

⁶ Clifford Geertz analyzed cockfighting in Bali, considering it a profound sport in which it was possible to understand the characteristics of a culture.

- Promote an awareness campaign among people of different ages focusing on the importance of physical activities for the creation of strong relations and social events;
- Underline the central role of the youngest and a good use of the spare time.

The target is 400 students: 160 participants at sport activities and workshops; 240 as pilot group.

The involvement of the control group let us to compare and after to assess how the participation in project activities had a good impact on social satisfaction and quality of life of the participants.

The specific *aims* are:

- Promote an awareness campaign among people of different ages focusing on the importance of physical activities as a way to create relationship and aggregation;
- Underline the social participation;
- Study the effects that this project would have upon the attitudes of the participants in a context of social share.

The intent of the study is to reach out how sports has changed, conditioned and influenced the reconstruction of the social fabric; and to valuate the effect after the intervention on behaviour and perceptions of participants. In addition, the involvement and the participation of the citizen of L'Aquila, the partnership with the local institution.

The results are an increase of the relationships for the subjects take into consideration and a descriptive analysis of phenomenon and a comparison among who have always practice a physical activity and whom that gave up after the earthquake.

3. The instruments of research

Analysis and data processing has two times (initial and final).

For the background research we have draw up a *pre-test report* to define the context and the starting characteristics of the participants, so to make them comparable with the results of the valuation at the end of research.

Monitoring and valuation instruments are questionnaire. The first, for initial phase, has two parts. The first part describes the composition of the group with biographical variables (gender, age, educational levels) and descriptive variables (on two main factors: the sport and the life after the earthquake).

Respect to descriptive variables. *Sports*: the 87% of boy and girls have practiced sports in the past every week. Actually still 83%. The main differences between males and females are in relation

to the sport practiced. In fact, the girls prefer individual sports such as dancing and swimming, while for boys there is a wide prevalence of team sports such as rugby, basketball and football.

Regarding *earthquake event*: there are questions about the changes in their familiar and social spaces. To understand how this event has changed their housing situation; to know which were their favourite social meeting places; and if they had to keep away from their family and social spaces. After the transfer for the entire project, the quality of the relationships with adults has suffered most from the social disintegration that took place after the earthquake. The project aims to create new opportunities for social gathering, so to re-establish the community relations.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of items that investigate the quality and satisfaction of students about three dimensions: *interpersonal relationships, self-efficacy perceived, family and social network*.

In general the participants has a fairly high level of satisfaction on the first two points, but lower scores than the last. Before the project activities, the subjects who did not practice sports showed a lower level of satisfaction for all three dimensions. This means the importance of the sport.

The results obtained from this first questionnaire had been used to define the objectives and specific activities of the intervention.

4. Final valuation

There are *three questionnaire*:

- Questionnaire for interpersonal relationships and social and family network, for all;
- Questionnaire on sport activities, for pilot group;
- Questionnaire of satisfaction for participants.

Results of questionnaires administered in the final phase of the project, has the aim to assess the changes that have occurred as a result of activities in the social and relational satisfaction of the boys who participated; the comparison; the involvement in the project or not and their level of satisfaction for the project.

Final phase objectives:

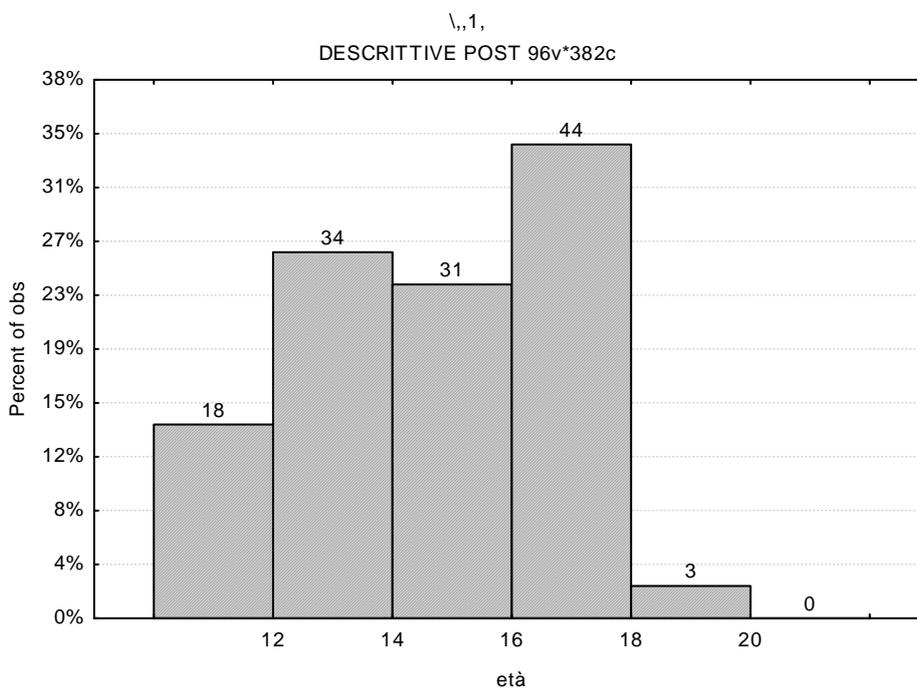
- Describe the composition of the samples;
- Analyze the level of satisfaction;
- Analysis of satisfaction with the three dimensions and check differences with control group;
- Check whether the considerations to the three dimensions were improved after the intervention.

The questionnaire for the second phase is also in two parts. The part one investigates the *personal details variables* and the *approval* to participate to the project.

Tab. 1. *Participants gender*

	Gender	
	N	%
F	56	35,44304
M	104	63,92405

Graphic 1. *Participants age*



Tab. 2. *Participants schooling*

	Schooling	
	N	%
High school	99	61,39241
Secondary school	61	36,07595

97% have enjoyed this new experience, participate at the proposed activities has allowed the boys to make friends in 84% of cases. Among the favourite activities are sports activities such as climbing, basketball, the canyoning, but also video and photography workshop activities (specifically, the laboratory focuses on the history of sports is very pleased to 74%). This fact reinforces the project idea that is based on sports activities and expressive form of

communication. We have achieved one of the work main: to provide to participants new socialization experiences that improve their quality of life after the earthquake.

The first *item* analyze the changes due to the earthquake. More than half of all subjects before the earthquake had its own space at home. After the earthquake, the same percentage was forced to leave their home. The forced displacement from their area had been 6 months longer for 57%, but it had been 2 years longer for 15% of cases.

More than half of the cases had given up their sports activities after the earthquake, removing an important context to socialize. 54% of the sample is currently engaged in sports activities, while 25% have left the sport after the earthquake. Approximately 68% in the control group practiced sports in the last six months.

The hypothesis is that only sport isn't enough to increase the quality of community networks, but is necessary a structured sports activities planned and integrated as our project proposed. The project power is the combination between sport activities and workshops. These two moments come from the context and analysis of needs.

5. The three dimensions

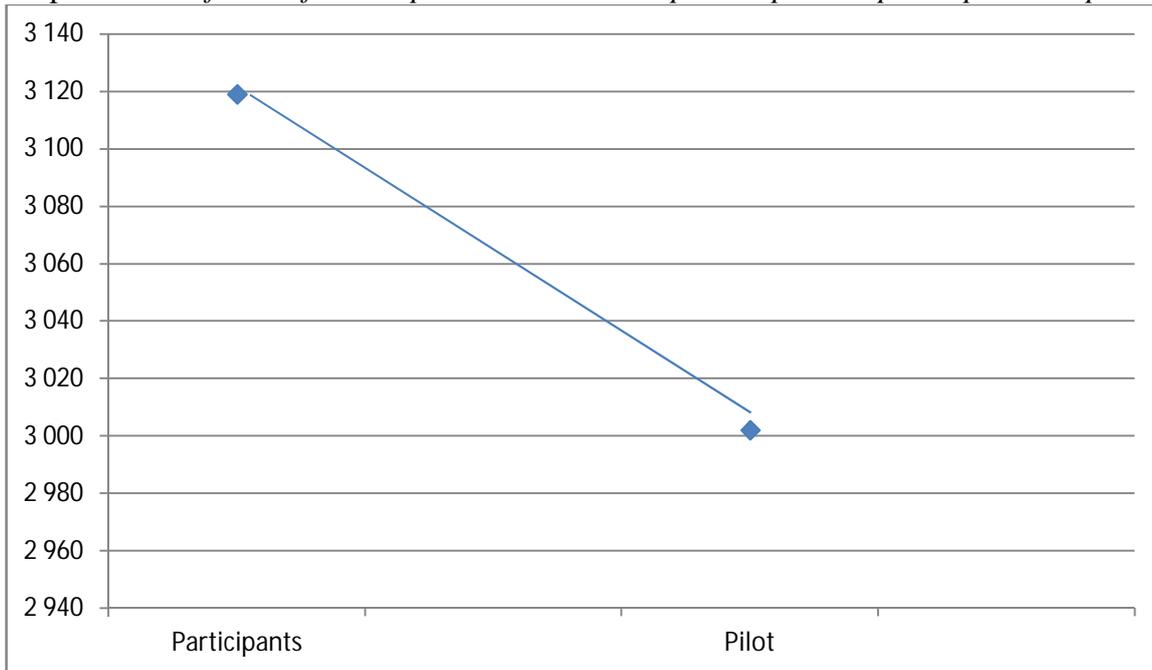
The second part of the questionnaire is composed by 68 items that investigate the quality and the satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) of participants about the *three main dimensions*:

1. Satisfaction about relations among boys;
2. Level of self-esteem and personal self-efficacy;
3. Satisfaction about social relationships with significant adults and their level of integration in the community.

With statistical analysis of variance, we find that in the three dimensions appears that participants differ from the control group for:

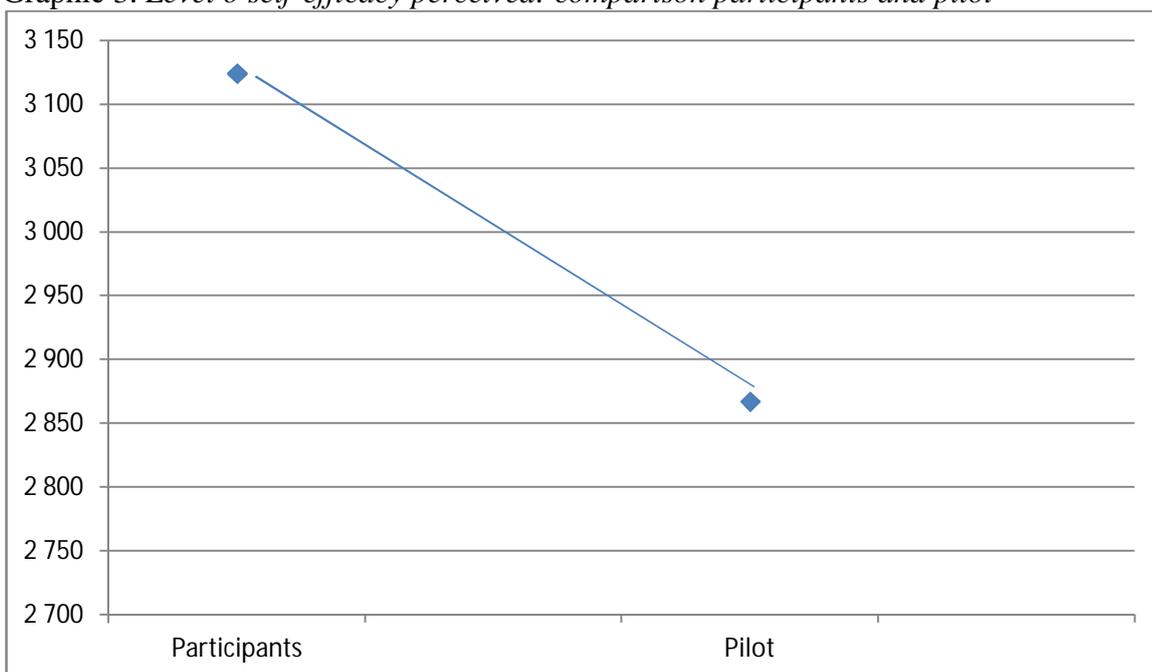
The *satisfaction perceived in interpersonal relationships*. The participants are most satisfied of their relationships with peers, for example: they find new friends and people they trust, they have a good use of their spare time.

Graphic 2. *Satisfaction for interpersonal relationships: comparison participant and pilot*



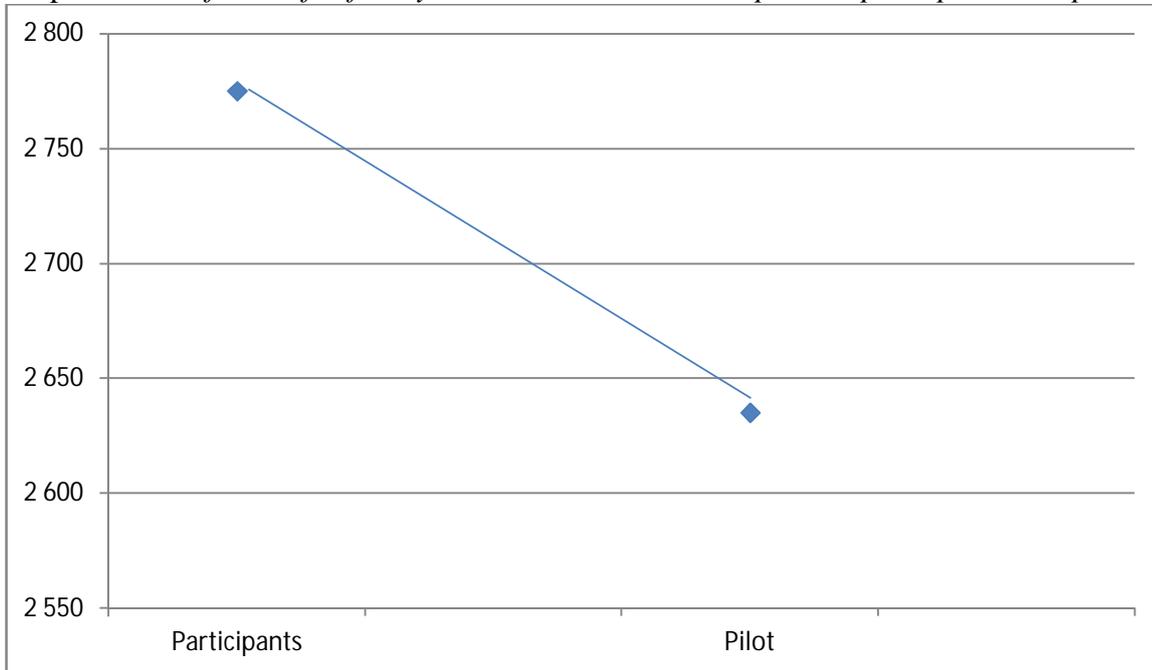
The *perception of the sense of self-efficacy* and self-esteem is higher. For example, their satisfaction for their scholastic performance; they have confidence in their abilities and their skills to solve the problems of everyday life. At the contrary, the control group did not change the level of self-efficacy perceived, while boys who participated in the project show an increase in self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy level.

Graphic 3. *Level o self-efficacy perceived: comparison participants and pilot*



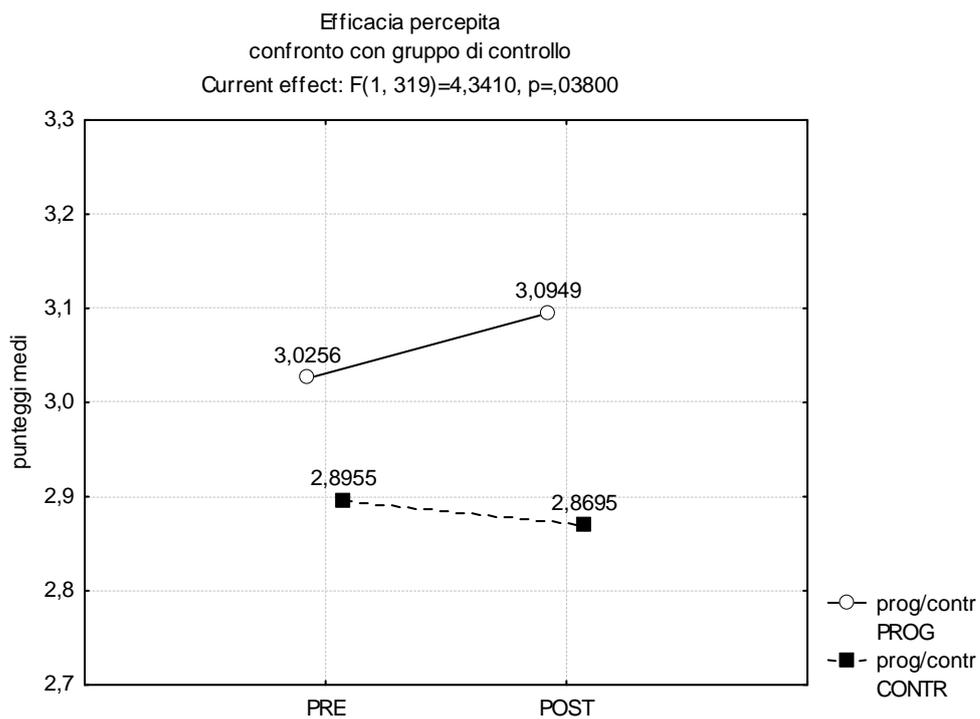
Satisfaction for family and community network. They trust in adults, satisfied with family relationships and social network present in their communities.

Graphic 4. *Satisfaction for family and social network: comparison participants and pilot*



6. Conclusions

Graphic 5. *General satisfaction on 3 dimensions : comparison participants and pilot pre / post activities*



The project activities have found an high level of appreciation of the participants, that want to repeat the experience. The project has achieved some important *objects*:

- To provide activities planned and designed on the basis of their difficulties and their needs;
- To provide new socialization contexts;
- Ability to make new friends;
- Experiment new roles;
- Learn new skills.

There aren't significant differences between pre and post intervention, but through this form of function the participants have competence about coping and problem solving. The project offered a socializing context in a moment of social crisis and turbulent times, able to maintain stable levels of general social satisfaction.

References

- ✓ Arcieri M., (in) *Libero Sport*, *La Libertas per L'Aquila*, CNS Libertas, a. 1, n. 1, nov. 2010, Roma, pp. 1-7
 - ✓ AA. VV., *Rilevazione dei nuovi bisogni delle associazioni colpite dal sisma del 6 aprile 2009, nuovi progetti e iniziative*, Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato della provincia de L'Aquila, L'Aquila, 2010
 - ✓ AA. VV. *Armed Conflicts and Natural Resources. Scientific report on global atlas and information centre for conflicts and natural resources*, European Commission Joint Research Centre, Luxembourg, 2011
 - ✓ Gasbarro L., (in) *Absolute Sport Magazine*, *L'Aquila. I giovani protagonisti nella ricostruzione del tessuto sociale attraverso lo sport*, Nautilus, a. 2, n. 5, ott. 2010, Teramo, p. 21
 - ✓ Grano M. e Pantellaro C., *La pratica sportiva per riprogettare il futuro oltre l'emergenza*, (in) CNS Libertas Conference "Lo sport e le sue storie", 26-10-2010, L'Aquila
 - ✓ Grignani M. e Toni A., *I Centri di ascolto nei comuni terremotati dell'Umbria. Esperienze e linee guida per una proposta di intervento*, Rassegna Italiana di Valutazione (n. 9), Terni, 1998
 - ✓ *Ibidem*, *A secondary prevention program in emergency situation: psychosocial aid to population*, Azienda Sanitaria Locale n° 3 Regione Umbria, Perugia, 1999
 - ✓ Pasini M., *Sport and its stories. Youth Protagonists in the construction of the social cohesion through sport*, (in) 38° Conference of International Association for the Philosophy of Sport, 15/19-9-2010, Italian University Sport and Movement "Foro Italic", Roma
 - ✓ Pasini M., *Living together L'Aquila*, (in) 2nd Conference "Living together through sport in Europe. Cross-disciplinary approaches in social sciences", nov. 2011, University of Strasbourg
-
- www.libertasnazionale.it
 - www.absolutesport.it