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Adventurers' adventures as a spark to resume experiential
activities in places where human activities are sustainable
and in defence of biodiversity

Candidato: Werther Giannini

Relatore (Supervisor): Prof. re Alessandro Bortolotti

Co-relatore (Co-supervisor): Prof. re Mike Brown

Coordinatore del Corso di Dottorato: Prof. ssa Carla Bagnoli

Abstract

This thesis is based on the latest decade-long studies that have noted that children living in Italy are doing fewer outdoor experiential activities in natural settings or simply in the green areas closest to their homes or schools. Italy was the first western country to be hit by Covid and to adopt lockdowns that restricted individual travel; those who suffered most from this situation were students who did not leave their homes for four months until 4 May 2020. The lockdowns forced students to attend classes remotely and suspended socialising in attendance for almost two years. After the pandemic ended, this thesis focuses on and questions whether students living in Italy have resumed outdoor experiential activities as they did before Covid. The studies in this field of research are still ongoing, but the first results reveal that many students are encountering difficulties in finding the stimuli and motivation to resume direct outdoor experiences and move out from the virtual bubble into which some fell during the lockdowns.

The first aim of the research project is to demonstrate how the adventurers' adventures narrated in presence at school can motivate students to resume experiential activities in places close to the school or students' homes. The figure of the adventurer, who interacts with the learner in the search for places to go on micro-adventures, does not find study in the scientific literature related to outdoor education.

The second aim of this research project is to demonstrate how place-based experiential activities that took place in places characterised by sustainable human activities or in defence of biodiversity, can increase the stimuli in learners to repeat similar experiences in the future, so as to encourage more sustainable acting and a deeper understanding of the concepts of biodiversity and sustainability.

Data collection technique and methodology adopted in this research project. Data collection was mainly based on the use of a questionnaire with one main question plus two sub-questions, structured in order to come as close as possible to the structure of an open interview. Secondly, photos and field notes were used as means to collect data that might have escaped from the questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire is structured in a way to initially collect quantitative data on a slider scale, secondly, the same questions are repeated in the second part of the questionnaire to acquire qualitative data. The questionnaire was always administered at the end of each experience, and the numerical data on the slider scale made it possible to create graphs showing the trend of the indoor-outdoor experiences, but above all they demonstrate continuous data. Thus, the quantitative data, in this research project, introduces the qualitative data, resulting in an innovative mixed method design to collect data.

Using an interpretive narrative framework, this research focuses more on one main question plus two sub-questions present on the questionnaires. Inductive analysis of the responses identified some recurring themes related to the questionnaire questions. Nevertheless, the variety and diversity of different experiences shared, the presence of

external experts with unique and personal backgrounds and experiences, favoured the emergence of recurring themes, each very different from the others, depending on where one was and with which expert. Rather, it can be observed that each experience favoured the emergence of themes strongly anchored to experts or places.

The focus group consisted of 21 students from a middle school in the province of Rimini-Romagna, aged between 12 and 13. These students participated in seven experiential activities, four indoors and three outdoors. The indoor shared experiences involved two local adventurers. The adventurers narrated their adventurous experiences at school with the aim of helping the pupils find the stimuli to identify the places of the micro-adventures that would follow in the second outdoor phase of this research project. The place-based outdoor experiential activities took place in the province of Rimini and involved reaching the chosen locations by sustainable means such as bicycles and one's own legs. During all the experiential activities, I tried to create an informal, fun and friendly atmosphere, so that these elements could facilitate socialisation, creativity and curiosity in the students.

The approach followed in this research project for choosing the locations of the experiential activities was not random, but took into account the following criteria: the shortest possible distance between the school, the focus group students' homes and the locations of the experiential activities, and the presence of connections between the habits of the focus group students and the chosen locations. Finally, the places chosen for the experiential activities had to be characterised by the presence of sustainable human activities or in defence of biodiversity. The adventurers and part of the focus group conducted interviews with each other to determine the places of the experiential activities that followed in the second phase of this research project. The students, in collaboration with art teacher Francesca, drew the places where they wanted to have an outdoor experience. These modalities adopted seek to encourage the emergence of more opportunities to empathise with specific places of experiential activities so that a sense of care and affection for these places can develop.

The findings are multi-layered, reflecting the dynamic nature of this project characterised initially by an indoor phase, continued with an outdoor phase; in particular, the latter fostered the flourishing of creative and critical thinking on the part of the participants. Participants also demonstrated involvement in sustainable experiential opportunities in places where human activities are sustainable or in defense of biodiversity. In addition, students were engaged in pro-environmental actions, spontaneous learning moments and challenging activities, alternating with relaxing moments in many of their experiential sessions, both indoors and outdoors.

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Chapter 1: Positioning the research

This research focuses on the following two questions:

-Can adventures, by narrating their own stories, motivate students to undertake micro-adventures in places where human activities are sustainable or in defense of biodiversity?

-Can the experiences undertaken by students in places where human activities are sustainable and or in defense of biodiversity, inspire them to repeat similar experiences in the future to develop more sustainable acting?

In pursuing these questions, my interest in addressing these topics arises as a result of the decade-long trend of Italian students having increasingly less direct experiences in outdoor spaces. With the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, this trend has seen a drastic reduction in the time experienced outdoors by students residing in Italy also as a result of being required to stay at home for months at a time and attend school classes remotely. The most recent studies highlight how many students, after lockdowns, developed a greater sense of loneliness and isolation, an increased state of anxiety and depression, and also the inability to find the stimuli to resume experiential activities as they did before the pandemic. In addition, post-pandemic research findings reveal that some students find it challenging to resume in-person socialisation, preferring the virtual world to real life. In the following sections of this first chapter, I outline some topics that will be explored in depth in the following twelve chapters that characterize this doctoral thesis. At this early stage of the thesis, I introduce what I consider to be of most interest through a brief overview.

Taking my bearings

In April-May 2007, during a brief five-week period at a middle school in Santarcangelo di Romagna, I began working as a History and Geography teacher in an Italian public school. The beginning was challenging due to the fact that there is no training period for new teachers before entering the classroom. The school principal assigns you your classes and you must be present in the classrooms from day one. You introduce yourself to your new students and their parents. As a teacher, you need to talk, empathize, and reassure a rapport with them, often for a brief period which as a new teacher is demanding. In my case, I had a class that was going to have an end-of-study exam in June and the expectations of me were high, even though I was a novice. At that moment, I had mixed feelings, as the responsibilities were overwhelming and my emotions ranged from 'What am I doing here?' to the 'Teaching is not so terrible after all'. The strongest encouragement came from my colleague in physical education, who after a few days that I had started teaching, asked me how long I had been doing this job, and after my answer, he stated, 'I thought for at least 'five to six years.'

In fact, it had only five to six days. His demeanor was honest, and at that moment I realized a few things: I was at ease when I was teaching and whilst I was teaching the subjects I loved the most, the classroom environment did not make feel comfortable. I felt a bit of envious of my colleague in physical education, who in warm weather, would take his students to the outdoors. I Knew the path I was on was right, I just had to bring history, geography, the local economy and our local food to the great outdoors. I simply had to find a connection between all these topics with another passion of mine: outdoor sports. A few years later, at the UNIBO library in Rimini, some books caught my attention because of the recurrence of the words 'Outdoor Education' in the variety of book titles and subtitles. I discovered that in native English-speaking and all Scandinavian countries, there is a subject matter that is part of their national curricula that considers outdoor spaces as a privileged place

to implement certain lessons that are generally taught in the classroom. I had become conscious about what I wanted to do as an adult: be an Outdoor Education teacher. Once I passed the age of 40, I undertook a PhD in Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) and perhaps I will go on to close my cycle as a teacher started a several years ago.

Experiencing the Italian school system since 2007, I always suffered from the fact that the disciplines defined as humanistic, were always detached from the idea of finding a connection between them and possible experiential activities to be carried out in places near the school. Another new factor that I considered not positive while teaching was noticing how the experiential activities that students had for decades led outdoors in naturalistic settings near their homes or school had moved to indoor places (Louv, 2005; Agostini & Farné, 2014, Bortolotti, 2019). This new trend defined as 'indoorisation' was happening for both sports and recreational activities (Louv, 2005; Van Bottenbourg & Lotte, 2010).

Some changes related to the daily habits that were occurring in many western side societies that concerned Generation Z, I could notice them locally at school: it was the shift of experiential activities from the real world to the virtual world (Spitzer, 2016; Ricci, 2017; Volpi, 2021). This new habits were leading to a lack of socialization in attendance, a possible increase in anxieties and depressive states, as well as digital isolation due to the possibility of developing forms of addictions toward social media (Turkle, 2010; Boyd, 2014; Spitzer, 2016). Children born after 2000, even in Italy, have more difficulties in finding stimuli and motivation in seeing open spaces as the privileged places to have direct experiences (Farné, 2014; Bortolotti, 2019).

According to Farné (2014), he states that the more recent trend of indoorisation and exclusion from outdoors has additional motivations in Italy: excessive parental overprotection that sees parents trying to avoid all forms of possible risks that are assumed to be more present in outdoors (Russell, 2005; Farné, 2014; Bortolotti, 2019). In addition, the diffusion of devices and the fast internet has led adolescents to spend

more time in virtual realities rather than outdoors particularly in the second decade of the 21st century (Spitzer, 2016; Ricci, 2017; Volpi, 2021). I investigate in chapter 5, of this research project, how these new habits are more referable to Generation Z. Also in the same chapter, I highlight that the students residing in Italy paid the most remarkable consequences as they for months at a time were not allowed to leave home and were put in the situation of having to attend classes remotely for five hours a day (D'Elia, 2022).

I analyse the findings of several studies, which began immediately after the first lockdowns that lasted 4 months until May 4, 2020, that point out that many adolescents have become phagocytized by virtual realities and have difficulty finding the stimuli and desire to socialize in attendance (Esposito et al., 2021). Other scholars, such as psychologists and psychiatrists, point out there has been an almost autistic use of socials during lockdowns and the consequence is the hardship from leaving the virtual bubble in which they have lived for months (Crepet, 2020; Recalcati, 2021a, 2021b). Given the arguments mentioned before, I lay the foundations for this research project in outdoor adventure education (OAE) in these first sections of the introductory chapter and in chapter 3 and 5. In brief, I investigate multiple aspects inherent in the educational field related to outdoor education. In this research project, I explore whether adventurers' adventures narrated in presence at school, can be a suitable motivation to resume experiential activities in places where human activities are sustainable and or in defense of biodiversity.

An ulterior field that I investigate in this research project is whether outdoor spaces for place-based experiential activities are preferable to choose them randomly, or whether it is more appropriate to follow some criteria in searching for these specific outdoor places considering that specific places matter rather than any outdoor space in general (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). While driven by my personal curiosity, this research can be a positive addition to the scientific literature pertaining to Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE), which sees no previous studies on the interaction between adventurers and students and sustainability and biodiversity experts and students. Seeking out some professionals who do not belong to the pedagogical field

and comprehending whether they can exert a strong appeal to young people with the aim of helping them find the stimuli to resume direct experiences in the outdoors, is one of the aims I explore in this research project.

This reserach project also seeks to be a grant for outdoor education to find more space in the practices and habits in the teaching of Italian schools after two years of pandemic. This post-pandemic historical phase might seem to be the most fruitful for favorable factors towards outdoor education to be triggered in Italy as well. As Bortolotti (2019) eloquently states, 'when one succeeds in overcoming the resistance that blocks the opening of educational horizons outside the classroom, strongly beneficial percussions are triggered. Several teachers involved in outdoor education experiences, have developed enthusiastic feedback from students who show more knowledgeable, responsible attitudes as well as increased creativity and curiosity. From such experiences that happened in outdoors, skills were developed that would be unlikely to emerge in a classroom' p.182. Scholars advocate the importance for educators and teachers to suggest an abundance of direct outdoor experiences so that students can develop the skills and capacities to cope with the challenges of a changing world. In addition, Beames and Brown (2016 p. 3) claim that 'the major challenges of our era, such as climate change, wars based on religious beliefs and public health (e.g., obesity, global pandemics) demad creative solutions that will not come from students who have learned to become excellent test-takers. Society needs young people who have been educated to address real-world issues on a planet that is moving swiftly'.

The above quotes can inspire myself, teachers and outdoor educators who want to keep up with contemporary pedagogy, social changes and environmental debates. In this sense, we can be more aware of and reflect on what more suitable stimuli and motivations may lead students to resume experiential activities in outdoors in the post-Covid era, particularly in Italy since it was one of the countries that used lockdowns the most. At the same time, the thoughts of some scholars reported in this section, inspire me to think about what types of outdoor experiences might contribute to developing sustainability-focused transformation in our children.

My personal and professional background: everything counts

In this section of the introduction chapter of the thesis, I report some of my personal professional background related to my work as a teacher. In addition, I mention some of my personal interests which together with the teaching job, contributed to the person and my personal identity that I have developed over the years and which led me to this research project in outdoor adventure education (OAE).

The university studies that began in the last century followed my greatest passion at that time: contemporary history, so I enrolled at the Alma Mater Studiorum of Bologna in the main campus of the university in San Giovanni in Monte. It was a picturesque place, which had been a monastery for a few years, then used as a prison and finally became the headquarters in Bologna of the faculty of Contemporary History and Medieval History. Every professor of the university has his office, in Italian called "cella" or "celleta," in this building. Those places, in the secular course of history, had first housed monks, inmates and then academics. Going there to attend classes, socialise with other students and study was a pleasure. This pleasure also came from how that place had been preserved and restored, because that place had its own particular history and this factor fascinated me particularly.

The university campus was very pleasing to the eye and all these alchemical elements had fostered the creation of a pleasant atmosphere among the students. All this stimulated me to study so that I would finish in the standard 4 years, while always working in the summers. The thesis I wrote managed to combine together my two strongest loves at the time: history and sports.

As much as this thesis was the result of negotiations with the professor who supervised my work, in the end I wrote a thesis I was quite proud of with the title: Physical Culture from Ancient Greece to Fascism: the Distorted Use of Sport in Relation to the Political Systems in Force. At the end of this course of study, only one problem presented itself. I had felt satisfaction in what I had accomplished, I had at

the same time enjoyed the work, but it had all lasted too short a time. Only four years. There was only one solution to regain the same emotions: to enroll in another faculty, that of Political Science also in Bologna, on Strada Maggiore Street, with specific university studies defined as political-historical.

The location of the university campus, however, had characteristics that were simply at the antipodes from that of Contemporary History. The idyllic relations I had had with the History professors had become a vague memory, the positive atmosphere I had breathed in the previous university ended. Something had changed. It took me significantly longer to finish my studies instead of the planned 4 years, partly because in the meantime I decided to find evidence about my new paradigm I had formulated, or the better known '*Australian theses*,' which claimed that I could have a better life in Australia. After 3 unsuccessful attempts in Downunder, I began to think thanks to my experiences there, all of them very enjoyable but unsuccessful, that I could consider seeing the place where I had been born and raised as the place to make a home and finally see all the 'good things' that were there that I had not wanted to see before: Romagna.

If Victoria State in Australia was also known as by the locals, 'The place to be,' then Romagna could be too. In the meantime, I had graduated from political science with a thesis on Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century. Soon after, I enrolled in a two-year postgraduate course to get certified to teach history-geography and Italian, always in Bologna. Ten years of study had passed: some fields of study were similar to each other, others were very different, and I had already embarked on a teaching career.

Personal experiences outside the study

In this section I will talk briefly about a passion that I have carried with me since I was a child and that has contributed to the formation of my person: sports. This

passion perhaps stems from the fact that my father taught physical education for 44 years in high school, but there is no clear evidence of such a correlation. The first sport was swimming.

I was born in Rimini, a seaside town: I could not avoid swimming. My mother took me to swimming classes and I refused. She used the methods of those times: she threw me into the sea where I did not touch the sand with my feet, so I learned to swim. The second *amore* was basketball. I loved this sport because it was a team sport and I found great friends: when we went to play away from home using a small bus, anything happened as far as fun was concerned, including playing basketball. Around the age of 16 there were the first powerlifting practices: the NBA was a must in the mid-1990s and players like Carl Malone, Charles Barkley and Larry Bird were the benchmark: they were an example for speed, power, fantasy and creativity.

They were the example to follow to improve myself. After breaking a knee twice, I stopped with basketball and experimented many other sports where the knee was not stressed laterally: I always needed to try different sports. Nevertheless, past the age of 36, I experimented the sport I never thought I would do and for which I was not suited. Triathlon. I was too robust and heavy, yet I liked it and saw no reason to stop doing it even though they always arrive at races among the last.

Triathlon races showed me so many locations in Italy and beautiful places that I probably would never have visited because I did not have a reason to go to those places and have a special direct experience there. The most exciting, best organized races with a strong presence of international athletes were held on Lake Garda and still today there is the landmark race: the International Olympic in Bardolino.

An experience I had during that race changed my perception of that sport, but also of places in general, and led me to some reflections. During the final phase, the running that is the sport furthest from me, I had a very strong crisis. I had no more energy, I had exhausted it. The important thing was to finish the race, to achieve a decent goal, but I was out of energy. I stopped and thought maybe it was better to retreat, however, I began to look around. In front of me was the lake, beautiful with

the reflections of the Sun, and then you could see the Alps: a unique lake-mountain contrast. The houses all had well-kept architecture with exquisite details and then the vegetation: lush with the presence of citrus fruits such as lemon. Lake Garda has a mild climate, so it also sees the presence of lemon plants, typical of southern Italy. I breathed that place in, managed to find some energy and finished the race. I had learned to find energy even though I had run out of it-I had found energy in the beauty of that specific place.

Layout of the thesis

With the aim of helping to glean the structure and flow of this research project, each chapter is briefly outlined with the purpose of anticipating the contents and the common thread that connects the 12 chapters of this doctoral thesis.

Chapter 2 explores the state of the art of outdoor education in Italy before Covid. In brief, the chapter highlights how outdoor education has not yet found its place within the national curricula although practices related to it have always been present in Italy, especially after World War II. The Emilia-Romagna region, has seen on its territory in the last decades, several projects related to Outdoor Education (especially in elementary school).

These projects, however, have remained at a localistic level and have not induced a structural change on policies at the national level, although the results of these (localistic) outdoor education projects have been positively evaluated regarding the development of personal growth of the participants who took part in these experiences. A historical perspective on the state of Italian public schools from the 1920s to the late 1970s is present in this chapter to lay the foundation on understanding the non presence in national curricula of Outdoor Education.

Chapter 3 highlights the fact that outdoor education has been a curricular discipline in certain European and non-European countries for several decades. These have developed their own scientific literature, specific outdoor education practices related to their local environments, and new pedagogical philosophies such as a place-responsive pedagogy. In Italy it is possible to see a partial development of this type of scientific literature, but not such or comparable to those countries that see outdoor education in their national curricula.

In Chapter 4 I explore the places on the Italian territory that see human activities being sustainable and in defense of biodiversity. I investigate why these places can be a reference point as locations where to propose experiential activities directed to students, considering the fact that the rhythm of nature in these places, is the reference for sustainable human activities. I investigate in this section the factor that these specific places, can lead to a slowing down of one's pace of life. In addition, I elaborate on how the mentioned Principals have the potential to foster slower learning because they are closely connected to the rhythm of nature, as well as permit the concepts of biodiversity and sustainability to be embodied more concretely.

In Chapter 5, I lay the foundation of the theoretical framework: I initially explore the indoorisation trend that characterized the habits of Generation Z and its consequences on mental health before Covid. In the following sections of the chapter, I delve into the findings of the first studies that relate to the consequences on students' mental health after the various lockdowns that occurred for two years starting in February 2020 in Italy. The state of semi-confinement that Italian students experienced during the pandemic revealed a more pronounced tendency toward indoorisation, a difficulty in finding stimuli to leave home again, freely, a difficulty in resuming socialising in presence without the use of devices, and thus a greater immersion in the virtual world and a consequent detachment from natural environments.

In Chapter 6 I explore the pedagogical philosophy that is pursued in the Reggio-approach. This is mainly inspired by the thoughts of Dewey and socio-constructivism. Its founder, Loris Malaguzzi, strongly advocated that various educational activities could also be conducted in the woods in the nearby Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, highlighting the potential that each territory could give from a pedagogical perspective. I explore how these principles have characterized the experiential activities conducted for decades by the Reggio-approach and how this educational model has been taken as an example by some schools out of Italy.

Chapter 7 describes the methodology and research methods of this project. I discuss the interpretive narrative approach used to address the interpretive nature of the responses collected after the place-based experiential activities given by the focus group in this research project. The methods used to select participants, the use of questionnaires, and the adoption of photos taken during the experiences useful both for documenting the experiences and for analyzing the progress of the experiences are described in detail. I also explore the innovative implementation of a mixed method that sees the use of quantitative data collection which is essential to introduce the qualitative data reported by students' responses to the questionnaires.

In Chapter 8 I elaborate on the research process that characterized this project. This begins by placing students, their passions and aspirations for their future, at the center of activities. Using an interpretive narrative framework, this research focused on a series of shared experiences experienced by the focus group between an initial indoor setting and then an outdoor setting for the final 3 experiences. After each shared experience, questionnaires were administered to participants. Inductive analysis of the responses on the questionnaires identified some recurring themes that were used to analyze the beliefs and motivations that lead participants to want to repeat experiences similar to those they experienced during this research project.

In Chapter 9 I report the biographies of the adventurers and experts in sustainability and biodiversity who took part in this research project. In addition, I report a historical, geographical, social and economic description of the special places that were chosen for the experiential activities shared among all participants of the outdoor phase of this research project.

Chapter 10 presents the first of two findings chapters. I also describe the shared experiences there were between the students and the adventurers and the search for outdoor places that characterized the second phase of this research project. The responses given by the students present in the questionnaires are analyzed and interpreted. I also explore the recurring themes that emerged from the data I collected.

Chapter 11 presents the second of the two findings chapters. I also describe the shared experiences there were in the outdoors that happened between the students, the sustainability and biodiversity experts, and an adventurer. The responses given by the students present in the questionnaires are analyzed and interpreted. I also explore the recurring themes that emerged from the data I collected.

Chapter 12, the conclusion, reflects on the research, highlights significant aspects of the style and process, and highlights the findings throughout the experiential period.

Chapter 2: The State of the Art of Outdoor Education in Italy

Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the state of the art of outdoor education in Italy before Covid. I will attempt to identify the circumstances that did not facilitate that outdoor education became a subject matter as it did in other European and non-European countries. Many factors such as those related to a mild climate (for part of the country) and the geography of the Italian peninsula, which sees in some regions the proximity of the sea, hilly areas and mountains within a few square kilometers, favored practices in outdoors for adolescents, especially after World War II, but not through public schools.

I investigate in one section of the chapter why these activities have not found a structural space in school curricula. I also explore, in the first section of this chapter, a factor that has not favored outdoor education so that it has been commonly practiced in Italian schools: the lack of training of teachers in the use of open areas. A following section of the chapter discusses the problems inherent in the widespread presence of a pervasive bureaucracy that limits teachers' actions and a parental overprotection that is increasingly present in Italian society. I explore, in a later section of the chapter, how Italian teachers do not feel supported or protected when implementing projects that are related to outdoor practices. In the fourth section of this chapter, I delve considerably into the distorted use of sports that occurred during the Fascist twenty-year period.

This section is crucial in this research project to understanding today's public schools and their shortcomings. Fascism used outdoor sports not to cultivate Olympic ideals, but rather as a basis for obtaining stronger soldiers for the battles of the fascist regime in the 1930s. I delve, in this section, into the fact that during this historical period in Italy the first prestigious academies for physical education teachers were born, and they were a reference point for the fascist educational system. This in-depth

study is necessary to understand why after World War II, as was the case for some European countries, the Italian legislature did not develop interest in introducing outdoor education into the national curriculum. Thanks to various sections of this research project that follow in several chapters from this one, I analyze the issue from a historical point of view.

It is possible through this social-historical approach, to formulate more detailed hypotheses why outdoor education still today does not play an important role in Italian school education. In addition, in a final part of the chapter, I study how some private associations, e.g., the Scouts, the C.A.I. (Italian Alpine Club) and local parishes present in the area, have been conducting practices related to outdoor education for decades, but no connections or contamination between these associations and schools have been created.

Outdoor education in Italy before Covid

There are many reasons why outdoor education has not risen in the Italian national curriculum, however, it is useful to analyze the connection between this discipline and those who could promote it in schools: teachers. As Bortolotti (2019) states, whenever outdoor education projects have been implemented in schools, feedback on outdoor experiences has often been positive. Bortolotti states that 'specific training of teachers aimed at interpreting outdoor spaces, from the nearest courtyard, park or urban center which can represent a context where to accompany students to actively invent their knowledge' (Bortolotti, 2019, pp. 182-183).

This can be one of the steps to promote a culture closer to outdoor education by engaging teachers and educators with new methods. The lack of training of teachers toward the use of outdoor spaces, is not the only factor to explain the lack of development of outdoor education. In order for Italian teachers to feel attracted to experimenting more with outdoors in their teaching, it is important that local

institutions also support these outdoor practices, starting from school principals to other territorial institutions such as municipalities and provinces (Bortolotti, 2019).

What emerges from the most recent studies related to outdoor education projects implemented in Italy, states that even a few examples of practices carried out in outdoors, can have the function of being positive examples to stimulate others (teachers/educators) to imitate such experiences so that a more favorable atmosphere is created towards the use of green spaces closer to schools (Ballardini & Battacchi, 1971; Bertolini, 2001; Bortolotti, 2019). Several scholars (Dewey, 1916; Bertolini, 2005; Gray, 2015) noted that an important factor is to start with students' interests and passions towards the practices they would prefer to do outdoors: this approach has not always been present in Italian schools, but it could be an interesting *modus operandi* to trigger favorable virtuous circles towards outdoor education (Bertolini, 2005; Farné, 2014). Bertolini (2005) claims the importance of 'the teacher being able to address the child using his language, starting from his experiences, not to stop at that point, but to go further in future experiences' (p. 13).

Italian teachers' resistance to seeing places outside the classroom as possible alternative teaching laboratories has today, more than in the past, increased significantly within the collective school imagination. In this section I investigate why there has developed a reluctance to use outdoors spaces by Italian teachers: some answers can be found in school bureaucracy and teachers' responsibilities when their students get harmed. Mincu (2015) draws attention that school bureaucracy increased significantly, especially after the 2000s, as a consequence of the 'era of deregulation' in middle school.

This growth in bureaucratic steps within schools, is a consequence of Italian national safety legislation that protects students more during activities that take place in a school setting, as well as the increased concerns coming from students' parents about experiential activities conducted outdoors (Farné, 2014). According to Bordignon and Fontana (2010), a negative effect of this new state of situation, were mainly activities in the outdoors. In addition, several authors (Semeraro, 1998; Ferrer

Esteban, 2011; Sceusa, 2014; Mincu, 2015;) state that teachers feel in a safer condition when operating within the 4 walls of the classroom, as they can more easily control what can happen with their students, thus eliminating variables related to 'unexpected events'. Mincu (2015) draws attention to the number of steps that are increased for the beginning of any extracurricular project activity, particularly for projects related to outdoor spaces.

A school extracurricular project, from elementary schools up to high schools, is often presented by a teacher who presents that project to the rest of the teachers of the related, classes for approval (Mincu, 2015). In case the project is considered valid from the point of view of both education, personal growth and acquisition of new skills, it must be evaluated by the parents of the beneficiary students and validated (Semeraro, 1998; Bordignon & Fontana, 2010). Taking into account increased decision-making autonomy in schools (Ferrer Esteban, 2011), in recent years some schools allow only one parent to invalidate a school project (Mincu, 2015; Bordignon & Fontana, 2010).

In practical terms, a unanimous vote by all parents of the class concerned is required. As a last step, the school principal after approving the first 3 steps may decide not to validate the project. Almost usually, school principals' reasons are related to 'we cannot guarantee a sufficient degree of safety for carrying out the experiential activities, especially if outdoors'(Ventura, 1998; Bordignon & Fontana, 2010). This condition of pervasive bureaucracy leads many teachers not to initiate the procedure for proposing extracurricular activities in open air spaces. Where school bureaucracy is perceived as an obstacle by teachers in proposing new project activities, the perception of not being protected by institutions in case a student gets harmed is very high.

As outlined by Sceusa (2014), the Italian teacher is safeguarded by the Italian State in case they need support as a result of negative events involving him or her with students. However, the most common perception by Italian teachers is that they feel abandoned by educational and governmental institutions when their active support is

needed. Professor and jurist Sceusa (2014) states that 'over time there has been an increase in the number of liability actions brought by parents to obtain compensation for damages suffered by their children in the school setting. This new trend has contributed to a somewhat widespread hesitant, if not fearful, attitude among teaching staff' (p. 32).

Outdoor spaces as a consequence, being places where the 'control' of activities by teachers is less than what can be achieved in the classroom, outdoors therefore, are perceived as the riskiest places to experiment with teaching and consequently there is a preference for teachers to avoid these situations (Russell, 2007; Farné, 2014; Bortolotti, 2019). Sceusa (2014) outlines that Italian teachers are safeguarded by a specific law (Law No. 312 of July 11, 1980) that avoids to public school teacher from being called directly by a court to answer for the presumed damages suffered by their students while in school, since the 'injured' person can go to a court and ask for compensation (in case there are reasonable grounds) only directly to the Italian State and not to the teacher.

Only at a later stage, if the teacher is found guilty of the damage suffered by the students, the teacher will have to compensate the state (Sceusa, 2014). These conditions seem to place the teacher working in the Italian public school, in a fairly protected condition, however, a paradox has arisen: the common perception of teachers is the exact opposite. The growing desire in Western side societies to put the blame on someone (educator/teacher) in case a student gets hurt, has also touched Italy as well as other countries. According to Jones (2004), he states that the current trend of increasing safety legislation puts outdoor education educators/teachers in a difficult position.

Teachers tend to eliminate potentially adventurous situations and no longer follow the principles and values of outdoor education, preferring orchestrated pathways without variables open to unexpected learning (Beames & Brown, 2016). Farné (2014) points out how the overprotection of Italian parents is probably a phenomenon more present in the Bel Paese than in other nations, in which instead the

attitude of taking risks during outdoor activities are more accepted, or at the very least, that outdoor education that engages young people in physical activities in natural environments are viewed positively by teachers and educators (Lynch, 1999). Farné (2014, p. 15) reports some anecdotes concerning a preschool in the province of Bologna as an example of the trend that characterized the perception of some parents toward the outdoor environment, particularly the garden attended by their children: the place that had been designated for outdoor education.

Such anecdotes do not pertain to the scientific literature, they cannot fit into a statistic that reflects the whole country, yet they help to understand the climate in which some teachers live in certain realities of the Italian peninsula. In this kindergarten in the province of Bologna, it was pointed out by some parents that tree trunks could be covered with foam rubber so that in case one of their children crashed, they would not be hurt. In addition, it had been noticed that over time some roots had sprouted from the ground: children could have tripped over them. The solution proposed by the parents was to remove the roots.

However, tree branches also had this tendency to grow and could be a source of accidents: the tree branches followed the solution found for the soil roots (Farné, 2014). The garden grass had several factors in common with the first two elements mentioned. It was also not always perfect, as outlines Farné (2014), that is, it was not an 'English garden' and was potentially slippery (pp. 14-15). The parents proposed the solution: was it not possible to cut down all the trees in the school garden and put a synthetic lawn in place of the natural one?

The mayor also intervened, who accepted the proposal of the children's parents (Farné, 2014, p. 15-16). In this research project, the anecdotes reported by scholars, are not meant to provoke hilarity. These stories, however, are real and instead highlight the emphasis on how the teachers of that kindergarten and potentially other Italian teachers who experienced similar events may have experienced these events. Stories and reports of this nature after the early 2000s, have become increasingly frequent and are often linked to an overprotective attitude of parents

(<https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/rimini/cronaca/scuola-genitori-e-insegnanti-serve-piu-fiducia-f958cc45>). The scholars previously mentioned, state that this climate commonly felt in the school environment, has pushed Italian teachers to increasingly reduce opportunities to create activities in outdoors related to the values and benefits of outdoor education (Farné, 2018; Botolotti, 2019). Other Italian scholars (Antonietti, Bertolino, Guerra, and Schenetti, 2018) highlight another aspect that has not facilitated the rise of outdoor education in Italy: 'teachers and educators have often lost the relationship with nature, for too many years they have been relating to the natural outdoor environment only with utilitarian purposes and compressed time when proposing outdoor experiences' (p. 111).

In this section of the chapter, I investigate some of the possible more recent motivations that have not favored the emergence of outdoor education. Outdoor education is not present in the curricula of schools, which have a strong autonomy in proposing experiential activities related to their territory. Nevertheless, the delay with which outdoor education arrived in Italy has mainly historical-cultural reasons that I explore in the next section of this doctoral thesis.

The historical and cultural grounds that did not favor the emergence of outdoor education

In this section of the chapter I explore the type of use that was made of outdoor sport during fascism and its consequences on the perception of it and of physical education teachers, after World War II. Several authors (De Felice, 1980; Isnenghi, 1979; Hunke, 1980; Frasca, 1983; Graceffa, 1995; Motti L., & Rossi Caponeri M., 1996; Conte, A.M. & Spigarelli., G.; 2000; Del Neri, 2014; Rubetti, 2019; Gentile, 20001, 2008, 2022) have analyzed the topic of education during the fascist regime. Fascism, with the Gentile reform of 1924, gave a major emphasis to the sports activities that the younger generations were to do from that time forward (Boffi, 1924; De Felice, 1970; Isnenghi, 1979, Gentile, 2001). This increased interest in sports by the Italian

regime, was seen as a low-intensity military preparation for young people who would become soldiers later in life (De Felice, 1970; Isnenghi, 1979; Conte & Spigarelli, 2000). Some activities were exclusively sporting, such as riding bicycles for the purpose of being fit and eventually reaching the battlefields. Other sports practices were to be considered pseudo-sports, such as jumping inside a ring of fire to prove one's courage (Gentile, 2001; Del Neri, 2014).

Certain sports were favored over others because they were seen as having a particular affinity for developing the warrior spirit: boxing to stimulate the fighting spirit, weightlifting to physically strengthen future soldiers, and even soccer to reinforce the nationalistic spirit (Del Neri, 2014, Gentile, 2001). Nevertheless, sports practiced outdoors were always favored because it was thought that these could in some way simulate theaters of war, or at least get future soldiers accustomed to knowing their bearings, knowing the different types of terrain, and thus being ready for all the adverse conditions that a sport practiced outdoors, would favor, to be ready for battles (Isnenghi, 1979; Russo, 2021, Gentile, 2022). The children of all ages who attended Italian public schools had to join a State youth organization, which was under the control of the fascist party. The boys were called 'Figli della lupa' (6/8 years old), '*Balilla*' (9/13 years old), 'Avanguardisti' (14/18 years old), 'Giovani fascisti' (18/21 years old). The girls were 'Piccole italiane' (9/14 years old), 'Giovani italiane' (15/17 years old), '*Giovani fasciste*' (from 17) up to university with the G.U.F., but only for men (Isnenghi, 1979; Del Neri, 2014, Gentile, 2001).

In the historical fascist context, Minister of Education Giovanni Gentile, with his 1924 school reform, began the process that put school at the center of fascism's interests as a tool to 'fascistize' future generations of Italians (Boffi, 1924). 'The school and all questions about education and Italian education, pointed out Gentile (1924), are an inseparable whole with politics' (Boffi, 1924, p. 6). Minister of Education Gentile, stated in a speech to Parliament in 1924:

‘Per codesto punto di vista, Scuola e Stato, Scuola e Paese formano un monolito, una forza viva verso uno scopo solo: il perfezionamento della collettività nazionale. [...] nello Stato è la scuola e libertà è responsabilità. Nello Stato è la scuola sia che dallo Stato venga gestita direttamente, sia che venga alimentata e amministrata da enti o da privati: gli enti e i privati, riconosciuti dalle leggi e contenuti nell’esercizio della loro azione entro le norme legali, non sono estranei allo Stato, ma organi indiretti di esso ai quali lo Stato, appunto per il conseguimento dei suoi fini, commette e delega parte della sua attività’ (Boffi, 1924, pp. 6-7).

Literally translated version into English using the Italian-English Zingarelli dictionary: (Traduzione dell’Autore/TdA)

‘For this point of view, School and State, School and Country form a monolith, a living force toward one goal: the perfecting of the national collectivity. [...] in the State is the school and freedom is responsibility. In the State is the school whether by the State it is managed directly, or whether it is nurtured and administered by entities or by private individuals: the entities and private individuals, recognized by the laws and contained in the exercise of their action within the legal norms, are not strangers to the State, but indirect organs of it to which the State, precisely for the achievement of its ends, commissions and delegates part of its activity’ (Boffi, 1924, pp. 6-7).

The above quote permits an understanding of the type of bond that the regime wanted to build between school, education and fascist ideology. Gentile's previous statements, leave no room for doubt: the fascist State and school were to merge and be one, with the aim of using school to educate new generations of Italians to believe in the fascist ideology that they would study in school thanks in part to the reform of

the fascist philosopher Gentile (Boffi, 1924; Isnenghi, 1979; Frasca, 1983). Nevertheless, the historian Gentile (2021), pointed out that it was not until 1937 that fascism finished the reorganization of all youth associations under the GIL: *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* or better known by the name of fascist youth (Isnenghi, 1979; Conte & Spigarelli, 2000; Gentile, 2001).

Historians as Isnenghi (1979), Graceffa (1995) and Gentile (2001, 2008), noted how Mussolini's regime through the school system, accompanied from the age of 7 until the age of 24, all children/youths who were born in the late 1920s, so that thanks to the school system, no one eluded the indoctrination of fascism. The regime used sports to have stronger, more agile soldiers ready for the battles that would follow in a few years: the Olympic ideals were put aside, the values of sports relegated to the background (Isnenghi, 1979; Gentile, 2001). This condition began from 1924 until 1943/1945 and had some negative consequences in the post-World War II period, both on how sport was perceived and at times towards physical education teachers and the school itself (De Felice, 1970; Isnenghi, 1979; Graceffa, 1995). The Gentile reform caught the attention of politicians and scholars, including foreign ones, because it had greatly changed the structure of the school itself compared to how the Italian school appeared before 1924 (Marraro, 1927, 1936). Fascism, which reached power on October 30, 1922, implemented its first real reform through the school with the Gentile reform, because it was from the school that fascist ideology was to be propagated for future generations (De Felice, 1970; Isnenghi, 1979, Gentile, 2001, 2008).

The Opera Nazionale Balilla concerned children from 9 to 11 years old; it was considered a pride for fascism because from the age of 9, it began the indoctrination of fascist propaganda, as highlighted by the historian of Italian background Marraro, but of English mother tongue (Marraro, 1927, 1936). Marraro (1927) noted how in a public speech, Minister of Education Gentile stated that a complete and perfect system of education should aim not only at the development of the spirit, but of the body as well.

‘For the pupil is not solely mind. He has a body also; and these terms, body and spirit, must be conceived in such close connection and in such intimate conjunction that the health of the one be dependent on the soundness of the other; and these terms, body and spirit, must be conceived in such close connection and in such intimate conjunction that the health of the one be dependent on the soundness of the other’ (Marraro, 1927, p. 27).

Giovanni Gentile emphasises the fact that physical education should and must be encouraged, as spiritual training and for the formation of character. In addition, Gentile affirmed:

'The teacher of physical education must always bear in mind that he is not dealing with bodies — bodies to be moved around, to be lined up, or rushed around a track. He, too, is training souls, and collaborates with all the teachers in the moral preparation and advancement of mankind' (Marraro, 1927, p. 27. <https://archive.org/details/nationalisminita00marr/page/26/mode/2up?view=theate>)

(Traduzione dell'Autore/TdA)

The above quote permits to have an understanding of how from the origins, Fascism, wanted to use school, sports, and physical education teachers, in the formation of what Mussolini called '*The New Man*' (De Felice, 1970; Isnenghi, 1979, Gentile, 2001, 2008; Gentile, 2022). In the project of totalitarian control of Italian society, fascism also thought about the role that women should have in the new fascist society, which was different from the role of men (Hunke, 1980; Frasca, 1983; Rubetti, 2019).

Regarding the connection between sports and women, Rubetti (2019) argues that girls followed a differentiated path. Fascism saw women as the future mothers of the next generation of soldiers, so a different course than men, was required. At the same time, sports were also practiced by young Italians, but only those sports that were thought to lead to greater grace, useful for the purposes of motherhood, and somehow ideally close to maternal values (Hunke, 1980; Frasca, 1983; Rubetti, 2019). I explore in this section of the chapter the figure of the physical education teacher during fascism, since what happened in Italy from 1922 until 1945 had a sometimes negative reverberation on a part of the school that persisted after the fall of the fascist regime.

The regime wanted to use sports for belligerent purposes, so it was also necessary to train a new generation of teachers, loyal to Fascist values, who would play a key role in the regime's policies. Royal Decree 684 of March 15, 1923 established the Ente Nazionale per l'Educazione Fisica (ENEF) under the Ministry of Education (De Felice, 1970; Del Neri, 2014; Gentile, 2001). However, this new organization was not considered up to the standard by the regime and thus ended its existence only after 3 years.

The ENEF was replaced in 1928 by the 'Regia Accademia Fascista di Educazione Fisica e giovanile di Roma' (Royal Fascist Academy of Physical and Youth Education in Rome) with legal personality and administrative, teaching and disciplinary autonomy, but only for men (Isnenghi, 1979; Frasca, 1983). At the same time in the late 1920s, as the Fascist regime placed a high emphasis on physical activity to be conducted by all children, including girls, the problem arose inherent in

the figure of a physical education teacher for girls only (Frasca, 1983). The Academy of Women's Physical Education based in Orvieto was born in 1929, reserved only for women and future physical education teachers. After coming to this decision, a fervent debate arose about the appropriateness of the choice that took place.

The official press of the regime took a clear position on the question, and the illustrated official magazine *Popolo di Italia* (October 1935), stated that 'Women's sport is a subject that has been widely discussed in all nations [...] It should be carried out rationally and scientifically, so that it is not directed to distort the character and functions of women: to be healthy and strong mothers who will probably give birth to healthy and strong children, and motherhood will be more facilitated if women are tempered by regularly practiced sport' (Frasca, 1983, p. 58). The figure of the physical education teacher, both male and female, was born under the fascist regime. In addition, Motti and Caponeri, (1996) and Rubetti (2019), have highlighted how the fascist regime succeeded in bonding the figure of the physical education teacher to itself, more than any other teacher of other disciplines, giving rise to a popular collective imagination in Italy that saw the physical education teacher as the spearhead in public schools under fascism. De Felice (1970), Isnenghi (1979) and Conte & Spigarelli (2000) have delved into how Italian republican institutions, born on June 2, 1946, and specifically the Ministry of Education, had to work to *defascistize the academies* (in Rome and Orvieto) created by Mussolini, with the aim of changing the Italian people's perception of both physical education teachers and a certain use of sports, which occurred for about 20 years until 1943/45.

Historians De Felice (1970) Isnenghi (1979) Conte & Spigarelli (2000), outlined that the Italian population after the end of the fascist regime that occurred in 1945, associated outdoor sports practices and physical education teachers with what had happened during the 20-year fascist period for decades (Isnenghi, 1979, Gentile, 2008, 2022). Schools and physical education teachers during the regime were used as a tool for political and ideological propaganda.

All this required several years before a different perception matured toward both sports and physical education teachers. This condition left a wide educational space and time (1945-1960) for other associations such as the Scouts and other private youth association entities such as local parishes to begin offering experiential activities in the outdoors instead of the Italian school (Carabetta, 1991; Sica, 2002, 2018).

These organizations gathered support from Italians, who, with the first economic boom of the 1960s sought out the most suitable entities and associations that gave their children the opportunity to experience experiential activities in nature because they were considered healthy and useful for their personal growth (Fuà, 1989).

Private organizations that offered experiential activities in nature after World War II

In this final section of the second chapter, I investigate the role played by associations such as the Scouts, the C.A.I. (Italian Alpine Club) and local parishes in proposing experiential activities in the outdoors. I explore how these associations have maintained an active and constant role in proposing experiential activities in the outdoors since the early 1900s, and as far as the C.A.I is concerned, since the mid-19th century.

After the historical fascist setback, the previously mentioned associations resumed their activities in the outdoors with renewed vigor. The first Italian experiment in scouting was made in the spring of 1910 by Sir Francis Vane, Baronet of Hutton, and was held in Bagni di Lucca (Toscana). On July 12, 1910, with the help of a local teacher, Remo Molinari, the baronet officially founded a first scouting unit with the name ‘Ragazzi Esploratori’, from which the ‘Ragazzi Esploratori Italiani’ (REI), an Italian section of the British Boy Scouts, took origin (Romagnoli, 1916; Sica, 2018). The primogeniture of Italian Catholic scouting can be attributed to

Mario Mazza, who founded RECI (Italian Catholic Explorer Boys) in 1915. Despite its name, this association never went beyond the borders of Liguria. It was in 1916, thanks to the efforts of Mario di Carpegna aristocrat belonging to the Pope's "Noble Guard," that the ASCI (Italian Catholic Scouting Association) was founded with papal approval and the appointment of an Ecclesiastical Assistant (Romagnoli, 1916).

Sica (2018), stated how since the origin of scouts in Italy, the Christian formation of boys has been one of the central points of scout education. Sica (2002, 2018), argues that this starting point always remained very clear in the educational tradition of Catholic scouting, constituting even today one of its most important peculiarities. The Scout association in the early twentieth century continued to grow rapidly until the rise of Fascism (Sorrentino, 1997). With the new Regime, came decrees to dissolve youth associations that did not agree to submit under the regime. ASCI was cancelled, but did not die altogether. Many groups continued in hiding until the end of World War II. The rebirth of Italian Scouting officially took place in the Rome liberated by the Allies in 1943 (Sorrentino, 1997). With the end of the war, the Scouts finally returned to their activities without fear. Several authors (Sorrentino, 1997; Sica, 2002, 2018) have studied how the popularity of Scouts continued to grow and until the 1970s the movement split into two major associations that still exist today, the AGESCI (Italian Catholic Scout Association) and the UIGSE-FSE - International Union of Guides and Scouts of Europe-Federation of European Scouting - (Sica, 2002, 2018). The different cultural climate after World War II, the new role of women in post-war Italian society, created a favorable opportunity for the birth of a single association of Catholic guides and Scouts in which boys and girls could coexist, with mutual respect and according to the principle of coeducation: it was 1974, the AGESCI -Association of Italian Catholic Guides and Scouts- was born (Sica, 2002, 2018).

I explore how another association such as the C.A.I. (Italian Alpine Club) played an active role in Italy in proposing experiential activities in nature for young people, practices that developed more after World War II. The birth of Italian mountaineering, then framed in an association that promoted certain values of it to

young people, came about at the behest of politician Quintino Sella on August 12, 1863. This occurred on the occasion of the ascent of Mount Monviso by Sella and other Italian mountaineers including Giovanni Barracco and Paolo and Giacinto di Saint Robert; thus the C.A.I. was born, which was inspired by similar associations cultivating the same interests in Europe.

These associations were present in other European countries such as Austria, Switzerland and England with the Alpine Club of London (Michieli, 1954; Furio, 2003). The authors previously mentioned, highlighted that these hiking activities were aimed primarily toward young people, with the intention of creating a young age group that would carry on in the years to come, what was learned from the direct experiences that took place in the mountains, with the adventurous and exploratory spirit typical of those times (Masciadri, 1989). The C.A.I. and mountaineering maintained a niche dimension for a lucky few until the early 1950s. After this decade, there was an explosion of activities that this association proposed to its members and also of individual mountaineering in general (Pastore, 2003). The C.A.I. indicates in its aims a special attention to younger people, so it is precisely to young people that it has dedicated a specific activity: *youth mountaineering*.

This activity is based on the conviction that the mountains can be an environment of growth for the young person, who then becomes the protagonist of the educational project of the C.A.I. The people entrusted with carrying out this activity in the naturalistic places of their province/region, (youth mountaineering escorts) must have, in addition to excellent technical training, also a solid preparation in the psycho-pedagogical field (Furio, 2003). Other organizations, in addition to those already mentioned, began offering experiential activities in nature around the 1950s.

Post-World War II Italy saw the two most important mass parties such as the Christian Democracy and the Communist Party, trying to attract future sympathizers and voters among young people to themselves by entering into a competition between the youth organizations of the Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democracy (Pecchioli, 1950; Mantovani, 1976).

This also occurred through the proposal of recreational and social activities to be experienced with camps or excursions in nature often close to the local parish and the local Communist Party section (Pecchioli, 1950; Camisasca, 2018).

In this historical period of Italy's rebirth, the entities and associations that began offering experiential activities in nature settings were numerous and driven by very different motivations: from the more educational/training of the individual to the more political. Only one entity lagged further behind in looking at the activities proposed by other entities that today we would call outdoor education activities: the Italian school.

Summary

In this chapter I have explored the possible circumstances that have not favored the rise of outdoor education in the national curricula in Italy and thus in schools. It is not possible to find a single motivation for this, but rather there are multiple ones. Italian teachers do not undergo specific training so that they feel more confident in using outdoors to implement their teaching, or experiment with a new one. The perception that they are not protected enough by the State or public institutions in general has led many teachers, especially in the last two decades, to try to avoid outdoors because they are perceived as more dangerous.

This condition that has been created over time helps to understand more about why outdoor education has not gained a foothold in Italy, but they are not enough to give a definitive explanation. Another factor, stems from the tendency for Italian parents to particularly protect their children from the possibility of getting hurt. Again, green spaces have begun to be seen as potentially more dangerous than indoor spaces, and safety legislation has moved in this direction, placing more responsibility on those who offer outdoor experiential activities. This climate is particularly perceived in the school setting and inhibits teachers from taking risks that now seem unnecessary even to avoid legal consequences with the parents of the children. In Italy, the Scouts after World War II, some youth associations such as the C.A.I. and local parishes have often proposed experiential activities in nature, and such activism may have led both legislators on educational policies and some teachers to see these organizations as better suited to propose outdoor activities.

To finish, I explored the negative consequences due to the fact that during fascism, sports were used as pre-military preparation for boys, and physical education teachers, under fascism, enjoyed greater consideration. The distorted use of sports during Fascism and the fact that the figure of the physical education teacher had become strongly linked to the Fascist regime, created after World War II a feeling of distrust on the part of the Italian population toward schools to offer outdoor

experiences. The memory of outdoor sports activities conducted by Fascism, remained for some years in the collective memory of the Italian population. This circumstance, left the space for other private associations (Pecchioli, 1950 Masciadri, 1989; Carabetta, 1991; Sica, 2002, 2018; Furio, 2003; Pastore, 2003) the possibility to propose experiential activities in naturalistic places, often related to the provincial or regional territory, towards the new post-war generations.

According to several authors (Rimini, 1965; Santoni, 1982; De Felice, 1970; Montanelli, 2003), the studies of these historians have pointed out that the Ministry of Education of the newly formed Italian Republic after 1946, worked for the resumption of the consideration of outdoor sports more for its values related to the Olympic and formative ideals of the person and not for the distorted use that had occurred previously.

However, in addition to the historical reasons mentioned above that placed outdoor sports practices in limbo for a decade after World War II in Italian public schools; it is possible to speculate that outdoor education did not take hold in Italy also due to socio-cultural issues, distant from the pragmatism as outlines Bortolotti (2014b). To conclude, there have been a layering of motivations one very different from the other that over a period of about 6 decades have not favored the rise of outdoor education in the Italian national curricula.

*Chapter 3: The reference pedagogical philosophy of the project
research: place-responsive pedagogy*

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the origins of outdoor education, where it developed, its history, and for what purposes. In addition, I highlight changes in the goals of outdoor education over time. In the first section of this chapter I explore the scientific literature related to outdoor education developed in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

In the following sections, of this chapter, I investigate the outdoor pedagogy philosophy that this research project sets as its benchmark: a place-responsive pedagogy. This section of the chapter is central to this research project, considering that the place-based experiential activities of the focus group, were inspired by it. The concept of place-responsiveness provides a distinct pedagogical difference for outdoor education, directed at developing a critical and sustainable relationship with nature, upon which this research project was developed. In the final section of the chapter, I explore the possible reasons why there has not been the development in Italy of a scholarly reference literature of this field of research, comparable to that which is present in several Anglo-Saxon countries, and beyond, that also see the presence of outdoor education in their national curricula.

A historical perspective on Italian public schools from 1945 until the late 1970s, is necessary to address in order to understand what could be a paradox: Italy does not see the presence of outdoor education in its national curriculum. Considering its diverse morphological landscapes, the presence of sea-hills and mountains often in a few square kilometres, a centuries-old regional history and traditions, all based on localism, I develop some considerations on how Italy can be an excellent laboratory for creating place-based experiential activities for pupils.

Countries that have given rise to outdoor education and a scientific literature

In this introductory part of the chapter, I explore some of the thoughts and the origin of the practices that have influenced and fostered the development of outdoor education, in its various forms. It is possible to say that most of these direct experiences related to outdoor spaces, and consequently the early scientific literature, developed in North America and Great Britain (Lynch, 1998). Only later did other nations, such as Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, developed their own scientific literature inherent to place-based outdoor education (Boyes, 2000; Wattchow, 2005; Brown, 2008b, 2009; Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

In this research project, I predominantly examine countries that have most recently developed their own theories related to outdoor practices demonstrating a detachment from the nation (Great Britain) from where these practices were initially imported. This occurred with the aim of promoting the formation of their own theories and practices based on familiar places, that is, those places where experiential activities near schools or students' homes would be implemented (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). In addition, Gough (2000) and Takano et al., (2009) outline that when outdoor education programs are imported from abroad, they lack connections to the local culture and thus are unlikely to make connections with local and indigenous ways. In this section of Chapter 3, I mainly investigate the scientific literature on outdoor education, practices and theories that have developed in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

Often, these countries imported practices and theories as a whole from the United Kingdom, that related to adventure and outdoor physical activity (Lynch, 2006). This was both because of strong historical ties to Britain and because these practices were considered universally applicable, but decontextualised from the territory that would see them implemented (Payne & Wattchow, 2008; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). In addition, several scholars (Higgins, 2002; Potter & Henderson, 2004; Brookes, 2006) outline how after some internationalisation of outdoor

education, arose a greater awareness on the part of countries interested in outdoor practices to develop an outdoor education based on the differences and peculiarities related to their own countries.

Thus, outdoor education practices linked to local cultural, social and historical values, are moving away from the countries from which they initially 'imported' outdoor education programs. Some scholars suggest seeking inspiration in one's local communities, the native landscape and traditions where they can use their familiar places to build their own outdoor practices, 'rather than becoming entrenched within a set of beliefs and practices that have, in many instances, been imported from abroad, we are advocating careful reflection on local conditions and opportunities' (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, pp. 24-25). At the same time, it is possible to claim that some countries have always been inclined to favour outdoor activities. As outlined by Lynch (1998), outdoor education has been part of New Zealand culture since its origins.

However, the strong historical connection with the United Kingdom at first saw practices of the outdoors with an aim that saw these practices as a boot camp or pre-military function, disregarding education and personal growth. In the past, early outdoor activities, for the younger generations of British and later Australians and New Zealanders, were seen as a preparatory phase for the military life that would await them once they became adults. For instance, Outward Bound also had the role of preparing marines to improve their survival rate and become more resilient, in times of extreme hardship (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993). Eventually, as the decades passed, outdoor education has become focused on the type of direct experiences that are on offer, intended for the natural environment: the outdoors has gone from being considered a battlefield, to a playground (Nicol, 2002a). Brookes (2003a, 2003b), states that the transition from military training to recreation has remained, incomplete.

Leadership, military, and resistance ideals have not disappeared; rather, they have been transferred into the personal growth aspirations of many outdoor education programs. Outdoor pedagogy before becoming more focused on active experiential learning took some time. It was not until 1999, following curriculum reform in

Aotearoa New Zealand, that outdoor education was officially considered as one of the seven key learning areas in health and physical education (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1999).

At this historical stage in the early 2000s, some scholars affirm that outdoor education has moved away from its origins as a pre-military practice to make room for what outdoor education can bring as a positive contribution to a person's personal growth, individual well-being, increased resilience, as well as the individual's contribution to environmental preservation (Davidson, 2001; Cosgriff, 2008). In addition, other scholars as Brown (2008b) and Hill & Brown (2014), highlight that outdoor education should not be based exclusively on high-impact adventurous activities. Instead, a place-based pedagogy that allows for greater connections to the places we are most familiar with the aim of developing a care and ethic toward them, is preferable.

Not until the 1999 reform, did several researchers (Lynch, 2006; Zink & Boyes, 2006; Hill, 2010) suggest that the central discourse of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand, focused more on the social and personal development of the individual, moving away from the original outdoor programs. In these years of the early 2000s, adventure and risk, have become the reference points for outdoor experiential activities. However, these latter peculiarities, have attracted the interest of some scholars (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Hill, 2011), who believe that the role of adventure and risk have become too dominant in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The changing perception of the role of place and the origins of place-responsive pedagogy.

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the creation of practice programs in the outdoors originated under the influence of imperial and colonial ideals, some of these coming from international movements such as the Scouts and the Outward

Bound which had the ultimate goal of developing physical strength, independence, and character building in the individual with the aim of leadership formation (Lynch, 1998, 2006). These practices had general characteristics in terms of implementation, that is, they often originated in the United Kingdom and then were 'exported' to the rest of the British Empire.

From this perspective, these countries that had to implement these practices did not play any primary role, other than to be the battleground (Lynch, 1998; Brookes, 2003a, 2003b). The concept of place was diluted, it became secondary, placed on the sidelines in relation to the pre-military practices to be implemented (Payne & Wattoo, 2008). After World War II, there began to be a debate more focused on the concept or importance of place. It also stemmed from changes in the habits of western-side inhabitants, as pointed out by Relph (1976).

The changes in Western societies were characterised by the permanent mobility of people leading them to be more detached or distant from the place where they were born and the places they had frequented in their childhood. 'We pay a heavy price for capitalizing on our basic animal mobility' (Relph, 1976, p. 13) and the price is a loss of attachment to the places that can give meaning to our lives. Geographer Edward Relph (1976) claims that there is an unavoidable reciprocity between people and places and how these are sources for the formation of our identity. In addition, other scholars from different areas of study highlight this detachment that developed after World War II between familiar people and places that characterised the direct experiences of our childhood and were the source of the formation of our identities (Morley & Robins, 1993; Casey, 1993; Orr, 1992, 1994; Read's, 1996; Lippard, 1997).

The places that allowed us to have direct personal experiences and build our identities seem to have lost their appeal as a result of changes in Western societies: place has become more abstract, nebulous and less connected to our daily lives giving rise to what is called placelessness (Relph, 1976). Scholars from other fields of research, agree with what is stated in the current section.

Cresswell (2004) and Hubbard (2005), state that the notion of place can be perceived as too broad, malleable or neutral to become almost nebulous: the concept of place could refer to anything or nothing in specific. In addition, Cresswell (2004) suggests that still needs to be more comprehension of the meaning of the word 'place' (p. 1) and how it eludes and is sometimes conceptualised abstractly. The importance of a specific place because that place has been a source of food for us has lost its value as Orr (1992) claims, since 'the immediate places are no longer sources of food, water, livelihood, energy, friends, recreation or sacred inspiration' (p. 126).

This statement, with a focus on food, is also expressed by the founder of the Slow-Food Movement, Carlo Petrini (2016). Places in our immediate surroundings, as Petrini (2009) points out, have been the source of our food for centuries, before the development of agro-industry. Through this new industry, Petrini (2009) argues, we began to import food from other countries whose geographical locations are unknown to us and often whose real origin we do not know, and what transformative processes the food we eat at the table has undergone.

The consequence has been that the places near our homes that once helped to nourish us and create our local culture and identities at the same time, these places have lost their value in favor of an abstract culture of globalisation based on all places and therefore none (Petrini, 2009, 2016).

A new awareness of the role of place

In the previous part of this section of chapter 3, I emphasised the sense of 'placelessness' (Relph, 1976) that characterises the lives of a part of the people living in Western societies. I investigate in the following pages of this chapter, that while emphasising Relph's assertion, there has been thought and debate that goes in the opposite direction to the phenomenon that has been described above. For some philosophers and scholars, place and the body are inextricably linked. Nast and Pile

(1998) state that we live our lives through sensory experiences which occur through place and through the body.

‘I learnt about Australia through my body, through what I could sit on. Touch, taste, see, breath, smell and move within. My surroundings gave me reality. My corporeality incorporated the world’s corporeality’ (Lines, 2001, p. 65).

The above quote from the Australian historian, highlights the importance of discovering one's land through the use of one's senses. Lines (2001) argues that the bodily experience of place is not something that is necessarily lost as a child matures, rather it is suppressed in the mind of the person who becomes an adult; this process is still present in some current experiential education methods.

A holistic approach, to how to experience the places where we live and find a sense of harmony with them and thrive, developed more in the late 20th century. Through our bodies, a holistic approach contributes to the re-emergence of interest in a culture linked to specific places and facilitates the discovery of greater connections between us and the places where we live in order to develop a personal well-being based on our immediate surroundings (Brown, 2009; Brown & Hill, 2014).

Landscapes themselves allow us to interact with the world in ways that can be described as holistic; landscapes facilitate emotional responses that can become significant events in our lives (Dakin, 2003). According to Rea (2008b), landscapes familiar to us involve our bodily engagement (with particular places or landscapes) and allow us to develop more trust in our senses and intuitions, rather than rational and logical cognition. Atherton (2007), states that direct experience through our bodies enables us to glean all that we can from our surroundings: colors, wind, scents,

and light and these have a strong power and influence our moods and emotions permitting us to experience places aesthetically. As Atherton (2007) eloquently claims, the nature of the experience lived through our senses in a specific landscape enables us to set aside the need to represent the event through words or to privilege spoken accounts as somehow more meaningful than bodily, silent and emotional responses.

Meanings created in this way often emerge because a person opens themselves up to new knowledge and trusts their intuitive ways of thinking, which are often overlooked, rather than feeling the need to describe sensations through words (Atherton, 2007). In addition, as Atherton, (2007) suggests, our bodies provide us with sensory responses from a landscape when it assumes a particular meaning for us. This occurs when we move within it and not simply when we observe it. Other scholars point out that, for instance, when the terrain becomes steeper and we climb upwards we feel tiredness in our legs, tightness in our chest and our breathing becomes labored (Davies, 2000).

An experience lived in a specific landscape, through our bodies, allows us to 'become beings in harmony with that landscape and in this process, beings who can (re) appropriate its meanings and (re) constitute bodies in relation to those landscapes, thus discovering how we have become' (Davies, 2000, p. 249). A holistic approach enables people to think about the specific place in which they live, and how the environment can empower them to thrive. This approach, stated by Atherton (2007) and Durie (1999), can facilitate the emergence of feelings of well-being within a place. A holistic approach places people in their physical, cultural and spiritual environment in a way that allows them to connect with that place (Durie, 1999).

In addition, Brown (2009) draws attention to the holistic nature of learning and the connections we have with culture and the land through embodied living in a place. Place gives meaning to events and is inscribed in meaning through the actions of participants. The connection to a place can be facilitated through living in that place, perceiving, relating to and acting with it. To have a deeper connection to place, in this

way, requires immersion in the physical, historical and cultural dimensions of the specific places where we live (Brown, 2009).

A place-responsiveness pedagogy in connection with sustainability

Place-based pedagogies have developed through scientific literature that has grown over time with significant input from authors such as Gruenewald (2003), Orr (2004), Martin (2005), Wattchow (2007), Gruenewald and Smith (2008) and Wattchow & Brown (2011). Countries such as Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand have seen the growth of a considerable scientific literature related to place-responsive pedagogy since the last two decades of the 20th century.

In part, it can be traced back to the specific history of the countries mentioned above; these were characterised by the presence of European settlers, towards the end of the 19th century, who saw these new lands as places to colonise, exploit and degrade the nature of the places they had discovered. These new lands did not initially have a strong connection between places and early settlers, at least not as there might have been between settlers and their places of origin such as Britain (Lines, 1991; Park, 1995). As stated by Park (1995), 'the sad fact of New Zealand's lowlands is that they were found, possessed and gutted by a foreign culture at a point in its history when.....the mystique of industry entranced it more than the mystique of nature' (p. 307). Australia was imagined as a prison-escape, at the same time Aotearoa New Zealand was a place to rebuild the very best of British society, a kind of ideal community, far from the United Kingdom.

The Europeans, however, believed they had the 'licence' and cultural obligation to clear and 'improve' the forests found in Aotearoa New Zealand and replace them with productive farmland and 'civilised communities', regardless of the consequences of their actions on the nature of the conquered territories (Park, 1995). These newly conquered places had no special histories and no special ties with the

first colonisers, who only considered their European countries of origin in which they had grown up and developed personal histories as their homeland. Such assumptions, or consideration for places, changed over time and went from being regarded as 'places to exploit' (Park, 1995), to places of battle (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b) where to educate new generations in the wars for the British Empire.

Ultimately, places in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand that were initially seen as lands to conquer, gained a new status in education where place-based experiential activities could be designed (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). These scholars state that in place-responsive (outdoor) pedagogy, 'the focus here is on how places are encountered and experienced by people and how people develop relationships with particular places and how these relationships are influential in the creation and maintenance of their identities' (p. 25). Wattchow and Brown (2011), state that places are important and tangibly knowing them; can help people appreciate them and live in greater harmony with them can help people appreciate them and live in greater harmony with them; 'Place, we feel, has the potential to provide a renewed philosophical and pedagogical basis for outdoor education' (p. 20).

Wattchow and Brown (2011) claim that a deeper understanding of what happens when people encounter a place is a necessary part of helping students learn about themselves and their communities, as a sense of 'who we are' is built on a sense of 'where we are'. In addition, specific places that are related to our lives can connect to certain purposes that belong to the values and aims of outdoor education: to facilitate the achievement of human potential through outdoor adventure experiences (Mortlock, 1984; Radcliffe, 1988). These results can be achieved when educators and teachers facilitate positive experiences in the outdoors, which can encourage the development of a care for the places where the experiences occurred (Hill & Brown, 2014). The importance of places, as pointed out by Wattchow and Brown (2011), derives from the belief that a positive experience can create an emotional connection to specific places: positive experiences that occurred in particular places to which we tie memories facilitate an ethic of caring for places (Hill & Brown, 2014). The place-responsive education described so far emphasises the specificity of places and

contextualises learning, deepening our understanding of the place in which we live by helping to develop realistic responses to local social and environmental challenges (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

Fostering place-based experiential activities in specific places can enable people to position themselves in the social, economic and traditional history of that unique place and permits them to be aware that they are part of that place. Places that are familiar to us, where we can repeat direct experiences over time, as stated by Wattchow & Brown (2011), can place us in a position to make everyday sense of our living. Specific places allow us to have particular experiences that can help us make sense of our lives. In addition, Brown draws attention to the importance of place sensitivity. According to Brown, abstract ideas in large spaces cannot teach us how to live in the world, so embodied, tangible experiences of place are necessary.

These kinds of place-based experiences are seen in recent scientific literature (Lugg, 2007; Irwin, 2008; Higgins, 2009; Hill, 2012, 2013) bringing together place-responsive pedagogy, environmental and sustainability issues. Several scholars towards the 2000s as Orr (1992), Bowers (2001) and Sterling (2001), and particularly after the first decade of the 21st century, authors such as Nicol et al (2012), Christen and Schmidt (2012) and Hill (2013), raised the interest about which outdoor practices to propose to pupils that have as their ultimate aim a transformation of self and society that would radically alter the foundations of the social and economic structures of western societies, with the aim of achieving more sustainable behaviour.

Proceeding from this framework, the straightforward question 'In what ways can experiences in the outdoors contribute to the transformation of self and society that environmental sustainability calls for?' (Nicol et al., 2012, p. 268) draws attention to the type of experiences that educators could propose to pupils and in which specific locations. Considering that sustainability can serve as a guiding, action-oriented framework for the transformation of self and society, Christen and Schmidt (2012) proposed a formal theoretical framework that goes in this direction, placing

sustainability at the center of their attention by correlating it with education for sustainability and sustainable development.

According to Christen and Schmidt (2012), they state that 'If sustainability is conceptualised casually, it cannot guide our actions in a justifiable way. As long as a concept is used to validate any action, it does not serve to justify any action' (p. 401). Beyond the goal of placing sustainability at the center of their thinking, Christen and Schmidt's (2012) framework considers questions such as 'what needs to be sustained' and 'how it can be sustained'. The questions posed by the scholars, and the framework on which their work is based, can connect to place-responsive pedagogies to reconsider what type of outdoor learning experiences are useful, with the aim that these are transformative towards more sustainable acting. One year after the theoretical framework proposed by Christen and Schmidt (2012), other scholars have contributed to the theoretical framework based on sustainability and connections to place-responsive pedagogies.

Mannion et al., (2013), claim that the core of place-responsive pedagogy, 'explicitly involves teaching by-means-of-an- environment with the aim of understanding and improving human-environment relations' (p. 803). In Christen and Schmidt's (2012) framework, the notion of the nature-nature system assumes a fundamental role and has much in common with the culture-nature interactions so central to place-responsive pedagogies (Mannion, Fenwick, & Lynch, 2013). In addition, reconnecting with the previous theoretical frameworks mentioned, Hill and Brown (2014) see considerable potential in trying to better understanding how the intersections between place, sustainability and transformation can be embodied in outdoor learning experiences and pedagogical practices.

After reporting on what has been theorised by various scholars in the field of place-based pedagogies linking to sustainability, in this research project it becomes central to raise the question of whether 'it is useful to think about what kinds of places can facilitate learning about the concepts of sustainability and biodiversity, so that experiential activities in specific places can facilitate a change of self towards more

sustainable action'. According to Hill (2013), he claims that 'not all experiences of place afforded by outdoor education necessarily work towards the goals of sustainability. If outdoor learning experiences are an important part of developing connection to and care for place (s)' (Hill & Brown, 2014), the scholars question how experiences could be constructed and facilitated to more effectively foster a transformative new connection to the environment.

The theoretical frameworks from different scholars reported so far in this thesis are the foundation of this research project that focuses on the role that embodied, place-responsive outdoor experiences might play in the transforming self and society as guided by sustainability principles. Furthermore, this section of this chapter aims to try to elicit a reflection on the following questions: What type of experiences, but especially in what specific places, could experiences be constructed and activities facilitated to promote a transformative relationship with the environment?

Could places where human activities are sustainable and or in defense of biodiversity be the ideal places to propose direct experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts of sustainability and biodiversity and facilitate a change of self?

A partial development in Italy of a scientific literature related to outdoor education and outdoor pedagogies

As I analyzed in the second chapter of this research project, Italy does not see the presence of outdoor education in its national curricula as a subject matter, and the Italian scientific literature has not developed a focus on outdoor education and outdoor pedagogies as it has in other countries.

The factors that have not facilitated this development are numerous and not always easy to recognise and identify. I begin this section of the chapter from a historical perspective which is helpful in understanding the dynamics that

characterized Italian schools after World War II and the connections with outdoor education. Consequent to this section, I try to investigate why outdoor pedagogies have failed to create for themselves a structural space in the educational proposals offered by Italian schools (which enjoy a wide autonomy of educational programs). Such in-depth study, with a soric perspective, is necessary in this research project and specifically at this stage of the third chapter to gain an understanding of the dynamics and reasons that have not favored the rise of outdoor education in Italy.

In addition, the chronology of historical events and the social changes and values that characterized Italian society from 1945 to 1968-70 form the basis for the comprehension of the development, or lack of growth, of outdoor education in Italy. Outdoor practices for new generations on the Italian territory multiplied in the late 1950s and early 1960s, corresponding to the Italian economic boom of those years and the increased wealth of families (Fuà, 1989; Olmoti, 1998).

Italian public schools in the 1950s needed a transitional period regarding the defascistization of all those activities attributable to the fascist regime perpetrated until 1945 (De Felice, 1970; Gentile, 2001, 2008). This historical period (post-World War II) did not foster a positive perception in Italian families toward the school and toward those teachers who were linked to fascism, as it was not possible to ascertain how many and how much some of them were compromised and linked with the regime (Giannetto, 2003; Montroni, 2009). Several teachers had acquired the fascist party card and for two decades had exalted its educational system.

Some, on the other hand, had approached the regime to gain stability, without really sharing its ideals. Moreover, some scholars such as Tomasi (1978), Isnenghi (1979), Gentile (2001, 2008), and Woller (2004), noted that not all teachers who expressed closeness to the regime were expelled; these professors, carried on under the radar, in the newly founded republican school, some fascist values (De Felice, 1970; Gentile, 2008). It took, therefore, some time to forget fascist values such as the Cult of the Littorio (*Culto del Littorio* in Italian) and the experiential activities proposed in the open air with warlike purposes, related to sports and otherwise,

conducted by fascism (Gentile, 2001; Russo, 2021). In practical terms, one had to wait for a natural generational turnover of teachers with younger ones who could not be linked to the fascist regime (Voller, 2004; De Felice, 1970; Gentile, 2008, 2022). In the same years, 1950-1960, other private associations which were driven by different motivations (from political to simply recreational or pleasure) began to offer experiential activities, to the new generations, based on the provincial/regional territory.

These organisations, such as the Scouts (Bertolini, 1956; Sica, 2002, 2018), the C.A.I (Michieli, 1954; Furio, 2003), the FGIC (Pecchioli, 1950), local parishes (Mantovani, 1976) and others, wasted no time and tried to attract to themselves the new generations to whom they could propose shared activities to be conducted outdoors; each association had its own bylaws and pursued its own goals, however, all these organizations had a common factor. To propose outdoor experiential activities to attract to themselves and to their values and prorie beliefs, the post-war Italian generations.

These practices were almost always locally based both because at that time in history Italian families were not wealthy and because of a popular Italian cultural thought that supported localism (Romanelli, 1991; Nuzzo, 2020). Doing so, they were attempting to discover the local landscape and naturalistic contexts, which were unique and at the same time each many different from the other, by leveraging the cultural diversity and local regional-type traditions that characterize Italy from the Alps to Sicily (Canevaro, 1976). In this historical period the Italian school suffered from a certain immobility, as outlined by several scholars such as Reimer (1973), Bertin (1976), Di Pol (1977) and Bertolini and Farné (1978), and failed to keep up with what was being offered instead as experiential activities in the outdoors by the private organizations mentioned earlier.

For the beginning of a change in the Italian school we had to wait until 1968/1969: the years of youth protest (Revelli, 2008). Until 1968 the Italian public school was not pushed to a substantial change of itself. In this historical period, 1945-

1968, public schools did not feel the need to reform themselves, and the space conquered by private organizations offering experiential activities in outdoors was kept under their control (Pecchioli, 1950; Mantovani, 1976; Sica, 2002, 2018; Michieli, 1954; Furio, 2003). In addition, a very strong critique of the Italian educational system, which was considered outdated, classist and anchored to models that still referred to the Gentile reform of 1924 (Genovesi, 1996), came from the book *Lettera ad una professoressa (Letter to a teacher)* written by Don Milani and his pupils (1967) of the Barbiana school.

This book succeeded in triggering a very strong debate in Italy about the condition of the school and its inability to renew itself and give the same opportunities for social ascent even to the poorest families. The contents of Don Milani's book (1967), anticipated some of the contestations carried out by the youth movement that arose in 1968.

Don Milani's book highlighted that the 'Catholic' Governments that throughout the post-World War II period had occupied the Ministry of Education, even after the 1963 school reform, had maintained a status quo that favored wealthy families and that school curricula did not deviate enough from those used under the Fascist period. The youth protests that began in 1968 in Italy strongly criticized the status quo of the Italian school, bringing a critical point of view toward it, with demands for a change in the educational model proposed up to that time (Bertin, 1976; Maragliano & Vertecchi, 1977; Hopkins, 1977). In the early 1970s, a number of scholars including pedagogists and others saw the moment as propitious to encourage some changes in the school education system, trying to make up for the time that had been lost, proposing as a new school model the connections between schools, their territory and pedagogies to be practiced in the open air (Bertin, 1976; Canevaro, 1976; Frabboni, 1978; Garagni & Guerra, 1976; Hopkins, 1977; Bertolini & Farné, 1978). Frabboni (1978), pointed out the importance of 'constituting a sort of communion of goods between the school and (its) territory, so as to ensure that local communities use the cultural resources and services available to the territory (of the school): in a permanent, continuous form, 365 days a year' (p. 45). Bertolini and Farné (1978),

highlighted how the school system was in need of change. The scholars, affirmed the importance of connecting an active participation between citizens, school and territory. Real participation of local communities, so that they could be agents of change, was advocated by the aforementioned scholars since the early 1970s.

'Citizens were no longer to be seen as passive users, but as active agents of the management of social services and cultural-educational structures' (Bertolini & Farné, 1978, p. 15).

Translation via Italian English Zingarelli dictionary, below is the original version

'I cittadini non dovevo più essere visti come utenti passivi, ma come agenti attivi della gestione dei servizi sociali e delle strutture culturali-educative' (Bertolini & Farné, 1978, p. 15).

The above quote, emphasises the importance of the particularities of each school's territory, as stated by Bertolini and Farné (1978). These 'local differences' could be the source from which to begin in developing stimulating cultural proposals for pupils. The school, in this desired mode, could consider itself facilitated in connecting with its closest surrounding reality, its territory, creating a kind of natural extension of it. Farné (1978) stated:

'The territory therefore of which the school is a key component, but not the only one, becomes the reference point 'of doing culture.' To the territory, in a broad sense,

the school looks seeing in it a kind of extremely rich and multipurpose textbook from which to draw material. [...]. Again, the territory then is the reference point for this phase, making it an active interlocutor in the educational work that the school can carry out (p. 41).

Translation via Italian English Zingarelli

dictionary, below is the original version

‘Il territorio quindi di cui la scuola è una componente fondamentale, ma non l’unica, diventa il punto di riferimento ‘del fare cultura’. Al territorio, in senso lato, la scuola guarda vedendo in esso una specie di libro di testo estremamente ricco e polivalente da cui attingere materiale. [...]. Di nuovo, il territorio quindi è il punto di riferimento per questa fase, facendo di esso un interlocutore attivo del lavoro educativo che la scuola può realizzare (p. 41).

Farné (1978), draws attention to the importance to the creation of connections between each school and its territory, drawing inspiration from the latter for the experiential activities then to be carried out in places near the school, or on the territory of the school itself. The assumption of the Italian pedagogue, is to envisage an 'open educational system' that is structured in several places, with an active citizenship that

intervenes in the work of education and that the school goes beyond its building, to make school where the school building is not.

Farné (1978, p. 46) argues that everything that 'is outside' (of the school) is authentic and cannot be mystified. In his 1978 paper, Farné suggested new perspectives for a contemporary Italian school, or one that was to come, in what he called a school that could be hinged on the idea of a 'decentralized classroom' that would be based on what the (local) territory offers for a co-construction of social, cultural, aesthetic values at the doorstep of all and not confined to the 4 school walls. The co-construction of new awareness for pupils also involved what would later be called 'ecological education'.

The 1970s in Italy were fruitful in the context of a demand for change in the educational practices conducted by the school up to those years, highlighting the lack of innovation and change. In addition, some scholars as Bardulla (1975) et al., theorized the first educational practices related to an ecological education to be conducted at school.

'The conceptions culminating in the myth of unlimited development, the artificial proliferation of needs, the rationalization of the waste of resources of all kinds, and the ideal of success pursued without regard to the price demanded in terms of environmental degradation, did not take into account the relationship between nature and man,' stated Bardulla (1975. P. 66). Bardulla (1975), affirmed that once we recognized the ongoing environmental degradation that also had as its effect a 'degradation of ourselves' (p. 65). In addition, continuing on this frame, Bardulla pointed out that it was the school's duty to activate the introduction of ecological teaching (ecology education) at every school level, preferably starting with training of university personnel and researchers.

‘The acquisition of an adequate level of ecological literacy, understood as an action that allows each individual to be well

informed about the environment and its consequent state of degradation, so that everyone becomes aware of the different ecological techniques, policies, etc., are necessary to promote the improvement and research of more advanced levels of environmental quality for every living being' (Bardulla, 1975, p. 82).

Translation via Italian English Zingarelli

dictionary, below is the original version

‘Il conseguimento di un adeguato livello di alfabetizzazione ecologica, intesa come azione che consenta ad ogni individuo di essere bene informato riguardo l’ambiente e al suo stato di degradazione, affinché ognuno diventi consapevole delle diverse tecniche ecologiche, politiche ecc., sono necessarie a promuovere il miglioramento e le ricerche di più avanzati livelli di qualità ambientale per ogni essere vivente’ (Bardulla, 1975, p. 82).

The above quote highlights the first assumptions suggesting the creation of new educational pathways in schools with the aim of raising awareness of the state of degradation of the environment and consequently creating environmental education programmes. Future citizens, and first of all children as stated by Bardulla (1975),

thanks to these new approaches would become more aware of the state of degradation to which the environment had already reached in those years. The school, as pointed out by Bardulla (1975), was to be the fulcrum that was to take up this challenge.

Nevertheless, the scholar does not seem in his 1975 and subsequent writings, to approach the theses referable to Farné et al., (1975, 1978) who advocated 'deschooling' (in Italian - 'descolarizzazione'), that the places where learning through direct experiences could be multiple, but above *all outside the school* thanks to an educating community and inspirations coming from the local area with the aim of implementing direct experiences. Bardulla, on the other hand, places the pivot of change towards ecological issues inside the school rather than starting from the school territory (Bertolini & Farné, 1975; Frabboni; 1975). Whilst, Bertolini & Farné (1975), Frabboni (1975) considered the students' and the local community's area of residence as the place from which to begin the change of the school, Bardulla (1975) advocates the change of the school starting from within the school.

As different as the views on how to change the school were, these were the first steps towards an attempt to make the school more modern and ecologically sensitive by implementing outdoor experiences. It was not until the mid-1970s that Italy saw the first new approaches towards assumptions that recognised the territory, the educating community and a greater awareness of the degraded environmental condition as the new reference points for substantial change in schools. These new assumptions and hypotheses did not develop their full potential and did not, however, lead to substantial changes. A partial reason for Italy's failure to develop its open-air pedagogical practices may derive from this delay that characterised Italian schools until the late 1970s.

In the meantime, the private organisations mentioned earlier (Scouts, C.A.I., local parishes and some parties), had continued to propose some experiential outdoor activities, with the intention of cultivating their own, young, members towards the values they professed. At the same time, the school, or rather the legislators, never really felt compelled to propose a reform that would introduce a subject matter based

on outdoor experiential activities. This did not happen either because of the immobilistic nature of the school as previously emphasised by various scholars, and because other associations had taken it upon themselves to do it (Bertolini & Farné, 1978).

As the result, at the time when the school in primis did not take on the burden of starting to experiment with its outdoor practices, the same scientific literature related to outdoor education did not develop, since the main subject that should have been the promoter of change was absent: the Italian school (Bertolini & Farné, 1978; Frabboni, 1978, Bardulla, 1975). The years of youth protest beginning in 1968 (Revelli, 2008), inflamed criticism of the Italian school which was described as classist (Don Milani, 1967), stagnating and incapable of change (Bertolini & Farné, 1978; Frabboni, 1978), as well as 'dead' (Reimer, 1973; Bertin, 1976). Nonetheless, the heated debate that ensued about how to change the Italian school and toward which model, potentially viewed the 1980s as the possible years toward change and a greater focus on open-air pedagogies as had already happened in Scandinavian countries (Bortolotti, 2019).

This did not happen and the reasons that can be formulated are numerous: The onset of more tangible parental overprotection (Farné, 2014), nascent safety legislation that placed the teacher at the center of responsibilities (Balduin, & Buda, 1999; Venturini, 2005), a more intrusive bureaucracy in schools that inhibited teacher initiative (Mincu, 2015), less appealing of close-to-nature activities by children in western side societies, and more hours spent in indoor spaces (Louv, 2005; Van Bottenbourg & Lotte, 2010). Multiple factors have not favored the rise of outdoor education so that it becomes a subject matter in the Italian national curriculum, a missed opportunity that would see Italy both for its biodiversity on the territory recognized by the scientific literature (Abbate et al., 2008), and for its centuries-old cultural diversity linked to the territory, be an ideal laboratory for outdoor experiential activities.

Summary

In this third chapter, I have attempted to describe the origins of outdoor education, the changes that have characterized it over time, and the development of place-responsive pedagogies by considering Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). After an initial phase of 'importing' outdoor education programs from North America and the United Kingdom, each country that has continued to develop these practices on its own territory in a second phase has tended to give them unique characteristics more related to their native cultures (Park, 1995; Lynch, 1998).

It clearly emerges that each country developed its outdoor education practices differently because there were different purposes, depending on which historical period was being referred to (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b). Place-responsive pedagogies do not propose universal prescriptions; rather, on the contrary, they foster connections between people and the specific places where people live, thus supporting outdoor programs that are unique because they are place-based, which are suited to certain contexts that are the places where we live (Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Hill & Brown, 2014).

While from a certain perspective it is possible to speculate that the first countries that implemented outdoor practices then saw the development of a scientific literature in this educational field, the latter fostered the emergence of a theoretical base that allowed outdoor education to become a subject matter in the countries considered such as Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1999).

In the concluding part of this third chapter, through a historical reconstruction beginning with the Gentile reform that took place in Italy in 1924 up to the 1970s, I have tried to find out the reasons that have not seen the emergence of a remarkable scientific literature related to outdoor education in Italy and thus the fact that outdoor education is not present in the Italian national curriculum. As arduous as it is to look

for reasons and explain something that has not occurred (the development of OE in Italy), Italy's peculiar history with fascism and its distorted use of sports for two decades (Isnenghi, 1979; Gentile, 2001), a certain school immobilism after World War II and the lack of will to reform Italian public schools for years (Bertolini & Farné, 1978), all these factors sedimented over the years among them, may have contributed to delaying the development of outdoor education in the *Bel Paese*.

To sum up, the contents of this chapter encourage a concluding reflection on the differences between the programmes proposed by the Scouts and Outward Bound, and the outdoor education programmes and practices implemented by Italian schools (when implemented locally, if any). The first mentioned have more 'non-formal' characteristics and the school ones more formal, especially from a design and planning point of view. This difference, more often than not, becomes more blurred when schools reach the implantation phase of outdoor education programmes.

*Chapter 4: Places in Italy where human activities are sustainable,
slow and or in defense of biodiversity*

Introduction

In this first section of the chapter, I focus on the assumptions expressed by several scholars involved in outdoor education. In particular, I analyse the importance of providing an abundance of experiences in the outdoors, and emphasise the fact that these environments should be natural and not artificial. In this section, I explore how in some places where certain adventurous activities are conducted, the participant is subjected to orchestrated and fast-paced routes, becoming 'adventure consumers'. These types of experiences, I discuss in the section, do not provide sufficient time for reflection on the lived experience. I end this section by beginning to highlight the fact that there are places with characteristics that are at the antipodes of those previously described, such as Slow-Food presidia. They are places that respect the landscape context, human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity, but in particular human productive activities follow the rhythm of nature and the production of the food of that place depends on the rhythm of nature.

Human activities are *Slow*. Part of this research project focuses on the characteristics of Slow-Food Presidia, taking into account that an experiential activity based on the place of the focus group, occurred in these presidia. In this second section of the chapter, I commence with some assumptions of scholars including philosophers and geographers, who state that modern lifestyles for some societies are characterised by people constantly moving around before they find a place to make their home.

I analyse how these lifestyles do not help the passing on of knowledge or traditions from one generation to the next. As a result of these dynamics, I introduce in this section a first example of a place where traditions have been passed on from generation to generation for more than 15 centuries, among the people of the places that were part of this research project. The topic is developed in the following sections.

In this third section, I investigate the studies conducted by scholars and the founder of the Slow-Food movement, on places where production is sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity.

I analyse how the characteristics I have just listed, are typical of peasant societies that have not undergone changes as a consequence of the development of agro-industry. I explore how in these places, the human being with his productive activities tends more easily to find an equilibrium with the territory where the productive activities take place, since it is from the territory where they live that these people derive their livelihood. In addition, I investigate and take as an example the production of a typical product from the Lifou Island area.

I explore how the procedures and processes that lead to the production of this food, inextricably linked to a specific territory, has contributed both to the formation of local traditions and the identity of the people of those specific islands. I outline how the Slow-Food Presidia take up this philosophy and are present all over the globe. In the final two sections I explore the philosophy that is present in Slow-Food presidia and how they can be an example of places where human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity. In these final sections of the chapter, I explore how the founder of the Slow-Food movement created the Slow-Food presidia with the aim of preserving certain cultivations and animals present on Italian territory often for centuries if not millennia that were disappearing as a result of depopulation and the advancement of intensive farming.

I explore how these places are also a *presidium* of local culture that had been formed through time and had helped several generations towards the formation of their identities. I highlight how good-clean-taste, the Slow-Food philosophy, are inextricably linked to the concepts of sustainability and the defence of biodiversity.

The importance of educators offering an abundance of experiential activities in non-artificial places

Clifford Knapp stated that, 'if you were lucky, your teacher took you out of the classroom in elementary school, middle school, high school, and even college, and when you think back on these experiences, you may still remember some of the things you learned when you left the classroom' (Quay & Seaman, 2013, p. 8).

This research project, particularly in this chapter, seeks to highlight how over time various scholars related to outdoor education have expressed the importance of educators and teachers offering an abundance of outdoor experiential activities particularly in natural, rather than artificial and energy-intensive places, making room for new practices related to place-responsiveness education (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Allin and Humberstone (2015), emphasise the importance of thinking about 'new or undeveloped ways of learning through adventure and stimulating critical discussion (p. 93), remaining within the context of a place-based pedagogy.

To this end, it is most useful to begin with the places that seem least suitable for experiential activities, places that offer pre-packaged experiences in which participants follow orchestrated paths and lack the opportunity to exercise autonomy and authentic choices (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Beames & Brown, 2014; Beames & Brown, 2016). Humberstone and Stan's (2012) observations seem to corroborate the previous point, arguing that some of the learning observed in an outdoor education center was predominantly performative in nature. The experiences, it was observed, were characterized by a high level of control over students' actions: little autonomy was left to participants, rather than providing them with opportunities to engage authentically and autonomously with nature.

Brown and Beames (2014) reported on their observational experiences describing (adventurous) experiences taking place at man-made sites disconnected from the human work or recreational activities that have characterized the habits of communities in those places for centuries. These sites are Snowfactor in Glasgow and Snowplanet in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (<http://www.snowfactor.com/about->

[us/to-do.php; http://www.snowplanet.co.nz/educativesnow-tour/](http://www.snowplanet.co.nz/educativesnow-tour/)). These centers offer participants pre-packaged experiences: they are predictable and calculated with the intent of maximizing profit through efficiency, which can only be present if variables related to users' possible autonomous choices are removed (Fraser & Brown, 2009; Beames & Brown, 2016).

Moreover, the speed to which participants must submit is helpful to profit. In doing so, insufficient time is left for personal reflection on the experience that has taken place, instead resulting in a series of fast-paced (adventurous) experiences that more closely resemble an assembly line, rather than a possible educational experience. According to Beames and Brown (2014), the student becomes a consumer of activities and buyer of gadgets to remember the adventure that took place at an *artificial site*, decontextualized from the rest of the other human activities present in that particular area. In addition, these sites are not sustainable in terms of energy consumption because they are artificial places. Whilst, it is possible to state that the waste of energy would not occur if the experience took place in a natural place, shaped by nature. It has been observed that similar artificial sites, such as those mentioned above, have sprung up in different parts of the world as reported by Brown and Wattchow (2011).

‘For example, we have seen the use of a number of interconnected shipping containers to simulate a caving experience or, more ironically, the construction of a mock ice-climbing tower (in the tropics) to simulate a mountaineering ascent. These developments illustrate a focus on the novel and the exotic. Such facilities supposedly act as a vehicle for personal and social development, but they can ignore and override local geographies and sensibility to local affordances’ (Brown and Wattchow, 2011, p. 27). Each of these built environments, Brown and Wattchow (2011) point out, acts as a simulation of the outdoor environment, where nature is supposedly made more accessible, predictable and convenient.

The places described are decontextualised from their surroundings because they do not trace any historical, traditional, or ritual connections. It is from the mere nature of these man-made places that one can start to arrive at criteria for choosing, instead, different types of places more suitable for outdoor adventurous practices with the aim of creating stronger connections to these specific places and developing an

ethic and care for place (Hill, 2010; Irwin, 2010; Hill & Brown, 2014). In addition, in order for the proposed experiential activities to foster the emergence of more environmentally sustainable action and greater awareness of biodiversity, it becomes necessary to reflect on the importance of the nature of the places of the experiences. The previously described artificial places that offer adventurous activities have a few points in common: they are artificial, often have high energy consumption, are decontextualized from other human activities, and offer fast experiential activities.

Speed is one of the secrets to maximizing profits. In fact, this does not give time for the participant to have a reflection on the lived experience. The *speed* and *artificiality* of some places chosen to run adventurous experiential activities, does not enable the learner to have the adequate (slow) time for personal growth that should instead be the focus of the proposed activities. Slowness is an element that facilitates self-reflection and change (Milan, 1995; Cassano, 2001).

Slow-Food Presidi, on the other hand, have characteristics that are at the antipodes to artificial places. In these places, the rhythm of nature is followed, and it is also because of this factor that human activities are sustainable. In addition, the places that are now called Slow-Food Presidi have been formed through the work of nature, often over centuries, and human activities are in harmony with the surrounding environment, because it is from this balance that humans derive their livelihood. It is therefore in his interest to preserve the place and its traditions, so that human activities, as they have been handed down for centuries, continue in the defense of the diversity of their product that is inextricably connected with a particular place (Petrini, 2009, 2016).

The importance of the places where the passage of knowledge from one generation to the next takes place

Places for human beings play a fundamental role in a person's identity, because all of us, throughout our lives, will link our memories to a particular experience that took

place in a certain place. Wattchow (2011) points out that 'we are who we are because of where we are and the experiences we have had' (p. 17). The places we frequent throughout our lives and reflections on the experiences we have had in those specific places will help us develop our identity (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

That noted, the last decades of the 20th century have seen people migrate several times before they are finally in a position to settle in a particular place, finding a satisfying job, but one that is unlikely to remain the same over time (Beames, Mackie & Atencio, 2019). As the philosopher Edward Casey (1993) stated, we run from one location to another location and pay no attention to the particularities and subtleties of places, particularly the history, ecology and economy of that place, which are likely to be unique. If we bring to these statements the thought of David Orr (1992), who asserts that 'we are deplaced people for whom immediate places are no longer sources of food' (p. 126), it is possible to reflect on an element of those previously mentioned that most binds us to a territory: food, seen as a primary necessity to be able to live. Food has always been linked to a specific place of production, which for millennia saw local communities feed only on that specific product, a trend that ceased especially after World War II with the development of the first mass wealth in Western societies, a phenomenon that spread to other areas of the planet after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and gave rise to a more intense exchange of goods, including food, thanks to the phenomenon of globalization (Lancieri, 2002; Trujillo, 2007).

Moreover, taking into account that today it is possible to buy food from all over the world, of which, unfortunately, we can hardly know the specific transformation processes that accompanied that particular organic matter to become the food we consume on our tables. According to Petrini (2016), we are not aware of the processing cycles of food from other countries that have their own national food processing legislation, which does not reflect our own local (Petrini, 2009).

The final food that we are going to eat, as pointed out by Rosset and Altrieri (2017), has no connection to our local area, to our local culinary tradition and our grandparents, and perhaps our parents, never tasted in their lives (Petrini, 2009, 2016). The Slow-Food philosophy, retrieved in places called 'Slow-Food Presidi' in Italian, refers to a cultivation, or even an animal, that is inextricably linked to a specific place

and is based on the fact that cultivation/animal has been produced/raised for a long time (often centuries, if not millennia) by the communities of that area and the process to obtain that specific product has not changed over time (Petrini, 2009, 2016).

In some cases, the same tools are used to process it as in the past, as occurs at the Slow-Food Presidia 'Salina Camillone' in Cervia (Italy) where the local community of salt workers use the '*pavoncello*' as it is called in the local dialect (in English shovel) made only of wood, the same tool and the same materials that were used in Roman times (https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/slow-food-presidia/cervia_artisanal-sea-salt/). The ultimate scope in this place (s) is not to increase production, but to carry on the tradition connected to that product which has its own unique biodiversity found only in that well-defined geographical area. What characterises these places is the fact that the productive activities of the local communities have always been sustainable because they were present in that specific area centuries before the advent of industrialisation and these activities have given rise to the culture and traditions typical of those places. These activities are sustainable and have been conveyed from generation to generation through learning and maintaining knowledge of the transformative processes, of that product, at a local level.

Moreover, these places are not artificial, prefabricated and often have not changed over time. In addition, since transformation processes are built on centuries of local traditions, they cannot be transferred abroad (Petrini, 2009, 2016). Such characteristics seem to be connected to the thought of Dewey (1938), who stated that 'teachers should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilise them as educational resources' (p. 40).

Agroecology: places where farmers produce food in a sustainable way, fostering the development of an identity linked more to a specific territory

Rosset and Altieri (2017), based part of their agroecology studies on the knowledge of peasant communities that have preserved the production of local cultivation

through sustainable processes, as these have been formed through the centuries in harmony with the surrounding environment, with the aim of the subsistence of the local community and not with the final goal of increasing production through intensive and potentially damaging agricultural techniques in their territory.

According to Rosset and Altieri (2017), they state that up until two generations in the past, people knew the origin of their food and thus the transformation processes it had undergone, a factor that has become much more difficult with the industrialisation of the countryside (Petrini, 2016). Since the second half of the 20th century, a multitude of people have left rural lands for the cities (Solimano, 2010). As a consequence of this migration phenomenon, there has been a transfer of ancient peasant knowledge from its places of origin to the more centralised and industrialised places of production where food is processed, places that are far from the original place of production (Rosset & Altieri, 2017).

Scholars pointed out that the large-scale industrial process has deprived us of the knowledge and know-how on how to transform the food we eat; this process has led to a loss on the part of ordinary people of the knowledge mentioned previously, but also to a loss of the ability to recognise the quality of food, as stated by the founder of the Slow-Food movement Carlo Petrini, a movement born in opposition to the opening of the first fast-food in Rome in 1989 (Petrini, 2009).

The declared philosophy of the Slow-Food movement, *good-clean-fair*, a philosophy adopted in the Slow-Food presidi, places where raw materials are produced and transformed into food following an artisanal process linked to local traditions. This philosophy is not a wish to be lucky in finding a good restaurant that offers local cuisine, but an approach on how that element should be chosen, which a part of the world population is lucky to have three times a day: food (Petrini, 2009, 2016).

'Good' (Petrini, 2016, p. 134) is referring to the organoleptic qualities that food should have, which over time should not have changed because they relate to the taste of a product linked to a specific territory, processed with procedures handed down for centuries among peasant or farming communities, organic raw materials that in the

past were only produced in a sustainable manner because they came from a pre-industrialised world. Consequently, the concept of good is anchored to certain sensorial organoleptic qualities that confer on a given food a unique flavour linked to environmental conditions, seasonality and the transformation processes followed in that territory, which distinguishes it from other similar but different foods. In this perspective, goodness assumes the role of a benchmark to understand whether that product has been produced sustainably or not.

'Clean' (Petrini, 2016, p. 166) is inextricably linked with the concept of sustainable, so a food product is clean insofar as its supply chain in each of its processes, from how it is grown-farmed to how many kilometres the food travels to get to our tables, all these steps meet certain criteria of naturalness and consequently sustainability. 'An unstressed and unpolluted soil will give products with better organoleptic characteristics and it can be said that the food produced there will be clean insofar as it is ecologically sustainable' (Petrini, 2016, pp. 146-147).

Furthermore, a food will be 'clean' insofar as all the transformation processes are sustainable, where the hand of man has always been light in transforming the raw material; just as one must respect the original tastes, so one must do for the environment of the place where a certain food is produced. Rosset and Altieri (2017), highlight the importance of respecting the biodiversity of the place where the food is produced because this leads to numerous benefits. Despite the myriad agricultural systems and historical and geographical particularities, most traditional agroecosystems exhibit the following remarkably similar features. We concur with Rosset and Altieri (2017) when they state that 'high levels of biodiversity, which plays a key role in regulating ecosystem functioning and also in providing ecosystem services of local and global significance; ingenious landscape, land and water resource management and conservation systems that are used to improve the efficiency of agroecosystems.

Diversified agricultural systems that provide a broad variety of products to local and national food sovereignty and livelihood security' (p.10-11). In addition, traditional agroecosystems facilitate the development of strong cultural values and collective forms of social organisation, including customary institutions for resource

access and benefit sharing, value systems, rituals, etc. (Denevan, 1995; Koohafkan & Altieri, 2010). This highlighting of the importance of biodiversity is echoed by Carlo Petrini, who states that biodiversity is involved in establishing the organoleptic qualities of that food and therefore a food is only of quality when it meets the criteria of biodiversity and sustainability (Grasseni, Salomone & Messina, 2009; Petrini, 2009, 2016).

'Fair' (Petrini, 2016, p. 174) is the last prerequisite for a food to be considered sustainable and thus also of quality, where fair refers to social justice for those working in the food production and processing sector, since the concept of sustainable is also in social justice (Petrini, 2016). Around the definition of *fair*, the concepts of social and economic sustainability revolve and are decisive, those who work in this sector must get a fair wage, otherwise the final food obtained cannot be stated to be good-clean-fair, because it would not be sustainable from an economic, human and dignity point of view for the workers.

Rosset and Altieri (2017), noted that today the countryside where agribusiness triumphs, are places where there seems to be no more life, places where some essential services for workers are no longer offered, places where social life, moments of aggregation, the consequent birth or simple maintenance of a local popular culture linked to a specific territory and consequently in some cases the failure to develop a person's identity because it is no longer linked to a specific territory, its history, its traditions, its folklore, have all been lacking. Petrini (2016) points out that, compared to hunter-gatherer societies such as the Sami in Scandinavia (*sámit* or *sápmelaš*), it is agricultural societies that lose their traditional knowledge related to food and health more quickly. Traditional knowledge in agricultural societies about food processing has been transmitted slowly; local traditions and values have been formed through food processing that have settled over time.

This slow living, typical of agricultural populations, allowed those specific populations time to reflect on their interaction with the *surrounding environment* that was also the source of their livelihood and to develop a more balanced approach to nature (Petrini, 2009, 2016; Stein & Santini, 2022). Living life slowly, handing down traditions orally and remaining settled in a territory, in a specific place, allowed

peasant populations the development of an identity bound to strongly localist values, customs and traditions, related to foods found only in that territory (Petrini, 2016; Rosset & Altieri, 2017; Grimaldi, Fassino & Porporato, 2019).

According to Petrini (2016), he argues that human beings transform and reinterpret nature every time they eat. When we produce food to put on the table, we put our hands on the natural processes of raw materials, we transform them to create our food and then 'alter' it by following our local culinary traditions. Petrini (2016) observed that in the not too remote past, food was only bound to territory or specific places. Food is one of the main factors that define human identity, since 'what we eat is always a cultural product' (Petrini, 2016, p. 49).

Petrini (2009) argues that food is the result of a series of cultural processes, in the sense that we introduce artificial elements into the naturalness of products, whether they come from the ground or animals, and then transform them into something else, into food, and such transformative processes for centuries were local, sometimes following very precise rituals during the transformation, and gave rise to a product (food) that was strongly identity-related for the population that ate it (Grimaldi, Fassino & Porporato, 2019; Imperato, 2021). This food was also sustainable because it came from the place where the people lived, who had an interest in preserving that territory as the source of their food production (Rosset & Altieri, 2017; Stein & Santini, 2022). A scientific study by scholars Andrew Ball, Tim Lang, James I. Morison and Jules Pretty (2005), supports the thesis that sees how much the distance between where food is produced and where it is consumed has increased, resulting in a model of food distribution that is completely unsustainable. The study began from the observation that until the middle of the 20th century, food consumption was mostly local; we ate what was close to our homes and what was present on our territory as we lived our daily actions.

Such traditions have broken down, as the food we eat may come from the other side of the planet (Petrini, 2016; 2023; Stein & Santini, 2022). Food, in any case, retains an important role in our lives as observed by the scholars mentioned above, who state that the criteria we follow in choosing that food and why become important if we want to make sustainable daily choices. In order for this choice to be thoughtful,

not random, but one that involves reflection before making it, because our choices to buy anything on the free market involve changes in what is produced, whether or not the food produced has followed sustainability criteria becomes a point of reference to keep in mind in the field of sustainability education for what can be a food education closely related to sustainably produced food (Grasseni, Salomone & Messina, 2009; Schiavone, 2018; Bevilacqua, 2018).

The final results inherent to food miles studies by scholars Ball, Lang, Morison and Pretty (2005), help to better understand whether a food can be said to be more or less sustainable. The scholars state that food produced and consumed locally may in some cases be more sustainable than organic food from other countries. The authors of the study set out to scientifically calculate the costs of so-called *food miles*, the distances food travels before it reaches our tables. They concluded that if the British only consumed food produced within a 20 km radius of their homes, the total annual savings to society would be £2.1 billion per year. The study was done on a basket of typical British food consumption, only after calculating how many millions of pounds it costs to pollute through pesticides, atmospheric emissions, soil erosion, intensive farming methods, and reduced biodiversity.

The authors of the food miles study used official British statistics and also calculated the costs involved in each journey from the farm to the supermarket and from the supermarket to our tables to obtain food that has not followed sustainability criteria. The findings of the studies show additional final costs of 11.8% of the price paid by the consumer, costs that are borne by the community, obtaining poor quality food that has not followed sustainability criteria, but which is paid more than a similar food if it came within 20 km of our home. The initial aim of the research, was more focused on making all the ecological costs hidden behind large-scale food distribution more evident, and they came across a specific item that unexpectedly has a big impact on the ecological damage caused by food production: food miles.

Consumers' choice between local food produced in a sustainable manner or food from other countries that do not follow sustainability criteria, has important repercussions on the environment and on intensive agricultural systems that have become unsustainable (Grasseni, Salomone & Messina, 2009). Furthermore,

consumer awareness of the situation described can lead to a change in our behaviour towards more sustainable actions as argued by Petrini (2016), simply by paying attention to the food we buy every day. In this research project, I highlight the fact that in the field of outdoor education, it is possible to develop a greater awareness of sustainability issues through direct experiences in places such as Slow-Food presidi.

These specific places, or others with similar characteristics, can enable students to be more aware of the fact that sustainably produced food has less negative impact on the environment. In this research project, it becomes crucial to emphasise that place-based experiential activities, offered in places where the processes of human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity, can foster transformative activities towards more sustainable action and a change of self and society, with greater sensitivity to sustainability and biodiversity concerns.

The places where sustainability and the defence of biodiversity are the core of human production activities: the Slow-Food Presidi

Slow-Food-Presidia were born in 1998 (Petrini, 2009, p. 21) from a need of some small Italian communities that were seeing the disappearance of the local food they had used for centuries for their subsistence (<https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/what-we-do/slow-food-presidia>). This need was taken up and developed by the founder of the Slow-Food movement, Carlo Petrini (2016) that wanted to preserve some well-defined places where to defend the cultivation or animal biodiversity typical of certain areas of Italy that were disappearing and therefore needed support, especially economic help, for the continuation of both the existence of that local food and therefore of that local community reality.

These communities had survived for centuries with a subsistence economy and had developed a local identity, also thanks to the transformation processes of that particular food. All this was in danger of disappearing as a consequence of the advance of intensive agriculture and agro-industry (Petrini, 2009, 2016; Rosset & Altieri,

2017). The definition of biodiversity, which emerged at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro environment conference, was defined as 'the variability among all living organisms, including those in the land, air, aquatic, terrestrial and marine ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and ecosystems' (<https://www.cbd.int/rio/>).

This biodiversity is threatened by the work of man, as stated in 2005 by FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf, who asserted that in the last fifty years, humans have changed ecosystems faster and more extensively than in any previous period in human history, mainly to meet the rapidly growing demand for food, water, timber, fibre and fuel. Diouf concluded his speech by stating that human activities have caused a substantial and largely irreversible loss of the diversity of life forms on Earth, a loss of biodiversity that cannot be recovered for what has been wiped out forever (<https://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/Synthesis.html>). Slow-Food Presidi, or other places with similar characteristics, follow the principles of agroecology and are present both in the West and in developing countries and seem to be a concrete answer to sustain biodiversity, but above all they are real places where one can eat food that has followed a sustainable process, places where one can touch biodiversity (Petrini, 2016; Rosset & Altieri, 2017).

As argued by Petrini (2016), Slow-Food presidi have another peculiar characteristic; the processes of food transformation take place slowly, following the rhythm of nature and there is no forcing the product to grow in a fast way. The concept of slow is a founding element of the Slow-Food movement itself, a concept that has arisen in various fields, from philosophy to food, as opposed to the idea of a fast-life (Milan, 1995; Petrini, 2016).

We concur with Franco Cassano (2001) that consider 'slowness as a value: this defence of slowness is neither a conservative reflex nor a literary exercise, but stems from more solid and concrete reasons. The first reason is that slowness constitutes, in our present western-side society, an experience that requires a deviation, the exit from the rails of cultural obviousness' (p. 154). Cassano (2001) asserts that slowness gives us the necessary time to think about the value of worlds other than our own, to escape

from that force of gravity that makes one culture incapable of understanding the others; slowness pushes us to rediscover certain experiences that are decisive for our maturity and that cannot be speeded up, because they only happen if there is a slow pace. According to Cassano (2001), he argues that 'crisis, growth and meditation only occur in slowness and through it we perceive the complexity of the problem' (pp. 154-155).

Slow-Food *presidi*, in their essence, have three important peculiarities described so far which this research project aims to highlight and take as points of reference. *Sustainable human activities*, the *defence of biodiversity* and *slowness* can encourage the emergence of questions about what might be the most suitable places to propose outdoor experiential activities. Slow-Food *Presidia*, in turn, offer help in *forming criteria for choosing places* to carry out a transformative experience towards more sustainable acting for pupils. Biodiversity, slowness and the presence of sustainable processes in human activities in the places described above are all key factors for an experiential activity that encourages learners to (slow) reflection and a change of self and society towards more sustainable action (Nicol et al., 2012). Petrini (2016) asserts that in *Presidi Slow-Food* the food produced often gave rise to strong identity connotations in the local population that produced it for long periods, taking on symbolic roles derived from the rituals that took place during the processing of the food itself.

Several scholars such as Bensa and Goromido, (2005), Douglas, (1982, 1998) and Lambert (1999), studied how Taro and Yam, tubers that have always provided the staple nourishment for the populations of New Caledonia, have given rise to the rituals and rules of the local Kanak population, rituals that have a strong symbolic value. The Taro (*colocasia esculenta*) is a plant characterised by large leaves and strong stems and is symbolically associated with the feminine element. The Yam (*dioscorea*) is a climbing-stemmed plant with a starchy tuber and is planted in June and harvested between February and April: the beginning of the harvest is marked by a great community feast and is symbolically associated with the male element (Douglas, 1998). The Yam itself is the symbol of *Lifou* (*drehu* in the local language), the largest island of the Loyalty Islands. The Yam, sacred, is the nourishment par excellence and

occupies a first-rate place among the riches to be exchanged; it is the noblest offering, destined for chiefs, elders and honoured guests. Every gesture made in the Yam field has a symbolic value, but the first harvest is a decisive moment and is celebrated through a ceremony that manifests and renews the bonds between the clans each time (Douglas, 1982). In preparation for the feast, the villages gather on a large lawn and, in front of the entrance to mwa pulu, the teâ arrange the pots of their clan in such a way as to form a row in front of the teâmaa.

The arrangement of the pots for presentation is by no means random, but follows the succession of clans in the village. The row of pots represents the road around which the clans are gathered, and the road is the route each group must take to get to kavebu (Lambert, 1999). As a result of the globalisation phenomenon, Taro and Yam have lost their role as the staple food of the local populations of that area of the Pacific Ocean, in favour of other foods that are completely unrelated to local culinary traditions, contributing to the undermining of the rituals and symbologies that have marked the lives of the peoples of New Caledonia (Bensa & Goromido, 2005).

In defence of the biodiversity of the indigenous products of the islands of the South-East Pacific, a Slow-Food Presidio was created in 2009 (<https://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/slow-food-presidia/lifou-island-taro-and-yam/>). This Slow-Food presidio has the purpose of defending the existence of Taro and Yam, but at the same time helps to defend the identity of those populations that on that indigenous food, have given rise to their own identity thanks to the rituals and traditions created during the processing of the food over the centuries (Douglas, 1998; Lambert, 1999). After highlighting the symbolic value associated with rituals that result from the processing of a local indigenous product and emphasizing the importance of local food that has also been an element of identity for some populations until the advent of globalization, this research project aims to have people facilitate a reflection on what might be the most suitable places to propose place-based experiential activities.

This section of the chapter becomes crucial in laying the foundation for asking whether the place in which the experience takes place can be chosen at random, or is it desirable to follow criteria for choosing places for experiential activities place-

based. This is especially the case if the ultimate goal we set as educators is for new generations to become aware of the current state of the Earth's health and that a change toward a more sustainable future can take place, starting with more conscious choices about that element that some of us 'use' three times a day: food. If it has followed sustainable processes, if it comes close to our homes, it all makes a difference.

Summary

In this chapter, it emerges that some adventurous experiential activities in outdoor education have, over the years, become more commodified, fast-tracked and orchestrated, leaving little room for the autonomous decisions a student might make (Fraser & Brown, 2009; Beames & Brown, 2016).

In addition, Whattchow and Brown (2011) highlighted how in some cases, experiential activities occur in artificial places where fake naturalistic environments are reconstructed. These places are often decontextualised from the other human activities of the territory hosting these artificial sites or similar 'adventure' routes (Beames & Brown, 2014). Therefore, it emerges how the peculiarities of these places themselves (speed and artificiality) are unlikely to foster in the learner a change of self towards a more sustainable action and to acquire a greater awareness of biodiversity concepts.

In contrast, I have highlighted in this research project the fact that some places have characteristics at the antipodes of the artificial: the Slow-Food Presidia (Petrini, 2009; 2016). In the chapter, I pointed out that these places have not changed over time, human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity, but above all the rhythm of nature is followed. In addition, human activities are slow because they are linked to centuries-old traditions that have seen the existence of a balance between human activities and the environment, without the exploitation of the last (Rosset & Altieri, 2017). Particularly in this research project, these types of places took on the role of drivers for actions sustaining sustainability.

The place-based experiential activities carried out in this project followed a criteria of choice: the human activities of the chosen places had to be sustainable, or in defence of biodiversity, or sustainable and in defence of biodiversity. In addition, some scholars such as Bensa & Goromido (2005), I pointed out in the chapter, have studied how certain rituals related to the processing of indigenous foods typical of *Lifou* Island have contributed to the formation of indigenous peoples' identities (Douglas, 1998; Lambert, 1999). This characteristic food of this geographical area,

the Taro and Yam, became a Slow-Food presidia in 2009, with the aim of both preserving it, but also preserving the rituals that are linked to it. The research project highlights how places where populations are more settled, can foster the transmission of traditions and rituals that support the identity formation of native communities

Such dissertations that I have developed in this research project, could raise a reflection on what are the most suitable places to propose place-based experiential activities with the aim that these are transformative of the self, towards acting more sustainably and in defence of biodiversity considering that not all practices in the outdoors achieve these ends (Hill, 2010, 2013; Hill & Brown, 2014).

Chapter 5: theoretical framework

Introduction

In the first section of the chapter, I investigate the trend of new generations spending more time on devices both to socialise and to obtain services, before Covid. This trend was already present in Italy as in other countries on the Western side. I investigate the reasons that lead new generations to spend more time in virtual realities and indoor spaces and the consequences on their personal growth, particularly the affective side. In this second section of the chapter, I explore some studies that have highlighted how the younger can develop forms of addiction to social media and virtual realities. These trends were present before the pandemic, so in brief, I relate that while this was the case before Covid when there was freedom to travel and move freely, this indoorisation tendency may have increased as a result of the obligation to dwell indoors during lockdowns in Italy. This research project, in this section of the chapter, highlights in chronological terms the events that led Italian students to spend entire days confined to home during the first lockdown (March-May 2020). After the first national lockdown, I explore how students living in Italy had to lead semi-confined lives at home for regional lockdowns through all of 2021 and part of 2022.

I investigate the fact that students, during the pandemic context, were forced into indoor living for months and developed repercussions on their mental health. In this section of Chapter 5, I investigate the remotely attended classes (D.A.D/remote classes in English) that have characterized the lives of Italian students for about two years. The requirement to take classes remotely led Italian students to live the 5 hours that would have been experienced in school in pre-pandemic times, in front of a screen. I explore the early consequences on the mental health of both students and Italian families, who found themselves in this new dimension sometimes in the space of a few days. In continuity with previous work, I investigate the findings inherent in the early studies conducted on students who experienced the first lockdown and the

effects on their mental health. The findings highlight that students who took part in these researchers claim to have suffered from anxiety attacks, depression, eating disorders and general uneasiness that had not manifested themselves before the pandemic, except to a much minor degree. Reconnecting with the previous section, I investigate some studies that have been conducted on the Italian territory that highlight the fact that those who suffered most from the pandemic context, were students.

Moreover, some studies reveal how the older population (65-85 years old), adapted more easily to the pandemic context by trying to maintain the system of affective relationships without the use of devices because they are used to relating in their affective sphere differently in comparison with the younger generation. I analyse in depth that students and teachers have been required to spend more time on devices to attend classes remotely. This new condition may have considerably affected the mental health of students and teachers. The latter factor has not distinguished the lives of the over-65s, who are less accustomed to using smartphones and more used to maintaining sociality without the technological tools. In line with what has been explored so far, in this section of the chapter I delve into the difficulties emerged by some Italian students, in leaving behind the habits created during the lockdowns and instead resuming the life they led before the pandemic. In particular, I outline that the direct effect of the pandemic is the so-called post-traumatic adjustment disorder. In this section of the chapter, I hypothesize how the Italian students' lived experiences may have created trauma as a result of the prolonged periods they lived at home.

In this final section, I try to hypothesise the space that outdoor education may create for itself after the pandemic context. Referring to the findings of early research on the consequences on students' mental health, I explore how these studies highlight that the lack of socialisation in presence, not being able to move outdoors, and the lack of the school context had negative repercussions on students' mental health, and some students demonstrate difficulty in resuming their outdoor activities as they were used to before the pandemic. I investigate and hypothesise how experiential activities that can be conducted in the outdoors can promote a resumption of socialisation.

Generation Z and the time spent at home on the Internet before the pandemic

In this section of Chapter 5 I investigate the trend of Generation Z spending more time in indoor spaces than previous generations before Covid. This trend especially is shared by people from societies on the western side. These 'new habits' have developed since the last decade of the 20th century, and then, it concerned more children born after the 2000s (Louv, 2005; Van Bottenbourg & Lotte, 2010, Farné & Agostini, 2014; Bortolotti, 2019).

Children born with the rise of social media, starting in 2004 with Facebook then following the other socials up to Tik-Tok, the final results of several researches in this field affirm that generations born after 2000 use the internet more markedly to obtain services and information, but mostly to socialise (Turkle, 2010; Young, 2013; Boyd, 2014; Ricci, 2017; Volpi, 2021). In addition, a growing body of scientific literature, asserts that in some cases young people spend more time indoors, rather than outdoors, as a result of forms of addiction can develop to social media (Turkle, 2010; Boyd, 2014; Spitzer, 2016; Lavenia, 2018). New generations are spending less time outdoors with a drastic decrease in playful-motor experience (Rivkin, 2000; Louv, 2005; Farné, 2014). The consequent danger signals related to indoorisation, note the presence of a large scientific literature, in this field of research, also in Italy. Biolcati and Pani (2006), state that adolescents lie about time spent on the Internet and also about time spent in the outdoors.

The hours spent surfing the net, result in constant excessive fatigue, sleep-wake alterations, school problems, decreased time spent with friends, disobedience and rebellion to rules set by adults (Pani & Biolcati, 2006). In addition, as Volpi (2021) outlines, adolescents today experience their debut in society in two different contexts: one in the real world and one, on the other hand, in the virtual world that is closely related to that of everyday life experience. Volpi (2021) and Ricci (2017), highlight that the virtual space is a glass bubble in which one mirrors oneself and observes the other behind the defensive wall of the screen, and one grows up quickly in a society where there is an imperative: to be present always H/24. This induce to occupying a

space always, even if only virtual, neglecting to experience the physical space of the real world (Spitzer, 2016; Ricci, 2017; Volpi, 2021).

This leads to the development of one's affective sphere among adolescents, differently if these were instead experienced and then developed in real life (Ricci, 2017; Volpi, 2021). Some adolescents' addiction to the Internet and social media has led new people to estrangement from the real world and in some circumstances to subsequent isolation (Boyd, 2014; Spitzer, 2016; Ricci, 2017). Spending even more than two hours a day on the computer can lead to behavioral problems or outright 'digital dementia,' as German scholar Spitzer (2016) states in his research.

Excessive use of the Internet and social media can lead to an increased likelihood of self-injurious behavior and suicide attempts. Spitzer (2016) notes that overuse of digital media can lead to insomnia, depression and eating disorders in adolescents. 'In addition, overweight has been increasingly linked to digital addictive behaviors in recent years; reduced social contacts and the onset of phobias are often concomitant effects, which create a downward spiral that leads not only to depression and isolation, but also to numerous physical disorders, particularly of the motor apparatus due to lack of movement and poor posture' (Spitzer, 2016, p. 235).

The reasons related to the decline of outdoor experiential activities (in the pre-Covid era) therefore have multiple causes, depending on which countries are considered. Nevertheless, there are roots that accumulate young generations in all nations, namely the emergence of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and, not least, Tik Tok. These virtual platforms lead in some cases to a detachment from reality, sometimes to a form of addiction to them and a consequent isolation in spaces that most of the time are indoor; these circumstances lead to the interruption of direct experiences that could take place in outdoors (Turkle, 2010; Boyd, 2014; Spitzer, 2016; Ricci, 2017; Lavenia, 2018).

Difficulties in disconnecting from virtual life

In this section of the chapter, I investigate how the launch of Facebook in 2004 saw in the short period of a few years the rise of the first forms of addiction to the first major social network. In a 2009 New York Times article, 'To Deal with Obsession, Some Facebook', psychologist Kimberly Young, director of the Center for Internet Addiction Recovery in Bradford, Pennsylvania, describes dozens of adolescents with whom she maintained constant contact through direct conversations, and the kind of relationship that had been created between social media and these young teenagers. They stated that they had tried to abandon their Facebook profiles, or even take a break from Facebook, finding it difficult to do this.

Young (2013), states that Facebook addiction is on par with any other any different addiction, and it is difficult to get sober. Psychologist Sherry Turkle (2010), director of the Initiative on Technology and Self at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, studied the addiction that Facebook had created among a group of 18- to 19-year-old adolescents as they sought to enroll in their future colleges. These young people found several difficulties due to a state of confusion as a result of overuse of their Facebook profile. This condition had caused them to try to take a break from Facebook (Turkle, 2010). The director of the Initiative on Technology and Self, outlines that several 18- to 22-year-olds expressed their difficulties in not opening their Facebook accounts.

Many of them stated that Facebook was not only a distraction, but they confused it or replaced it with real life. They also expressed their difficulties in not opening their Facebook account for more than a few days and that they often felt exhausted after resuming their social activities on the aforementioned social and that they did not feel up to the descriptions they had made about themselves, which did not correspond to reality (Turkle, 2010). These issues concern adolescents from countries on the so-called western side the most, although these can potentially develop anywhere there is internet coverage and use of devices by young people

(Tran, Huong, Hinh & et al., 2017; Zenebe, Kunno, Mekonnen et al., 2021; Cash, Rae, Steel & Winkler, 2012). The '*digito ergo sum*' (Volpi, 2021, p. 18) seems to be the dominant *leit motive* of many adolescents. All of this leads to unconscious acting and is dangerous for the development of the *adolescent self* if thinking about reflection is not supported and encouraged.

As introduced earlier (Volpi, 2021), the scholar states that virtual reality does not allow the development of the affective sense for the other, because the socialisation in attendance is lacking: the *vis a vis* interpersonal relationships that would allow a different affective growth are missing.

The beginning of lockdowns in Italy and the indoor life of Italian students

In this section of the chapter, I delve into the events that took place after the spread of Covid in Europe since the early days of February 2020. This in-depth analysis is necessary to comprehend the chain of policy decisions that occurred from February 2020 through all of 2022 in Italy and the consequences resulting from the numerous lockdowns that were decided by the Italian government in that precise historical context.

In particular, I investigate and delve into the semi-confinement to which Italian students were forced to undergo during the pandemic as they were the only ones, of the entire Italian population, who were not allowed to leave their homes for months. Italy was the first European democracy to be hit by Covid-19 (WHO, 2020; Ignazi, 2020; Bull, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO), officially confirmed the outbreak of Coronavirus in Wuhan on January 21 (WHO, 2020). Two days later a quarantine of only that Chinese province was imposed. In Italy, as a result of the news

from China, a task force was established at the Ministry of Health to coordinate possible actions on January 22, 2020. On February 23, 2020, the first so-called 'red zones' were established, all in northern Italy (Ignazi, 2020; Bull, 2021). The red zones were ten municipalities in Lombardy and one in Veneto, totaling about 50,000 people. These people were placed in home confinement in 24 hours.

Schools, universities, museums, theaters, and other public places where it was possible to meet other people for recreational purposes and socialising were closed in these municipalities. All commercial activities were prohibited, except those involving the production and sale of basic necessities as food (Ignazi, 2020; Celotto, 2020; Bull, 2021). Public and private meetings and gatherings were considered illegal: these bans were strictly controlled by law enforcement agencies (Carabinieri, State Police, Guardia di Finanza, Local Police).

Ignazi (2020) and Celotto (2020) outline that it was The Ministry of Health, in consultation with regional governments and the national Council of Ministers, that arranged for the total closure of Covid-affected areas: an unprecedented move since World War II in a peacetime European liberal democracy (Bull, 2001). This decision came as a shock to people accustomed to the exercise of democratic freedoms. Ignazi (2020) and Celotto (2020) assert that the governments of other European states, did not immediately understand the gravity of the situation. In the following days it became clear that the virus had already 'escaped' from the red zones and was spreading rapidly in northern Italy.

Therefore, on March 1, the government created a new 'yellow zone' with fewer restrictions than the red zones (consisting of the entire regions of Emilia-Romagna, Veneto and the provinces of Pesaro-Urbino and Savona), effectively dividing Italy into three separate zones with different levels of restrictions (Bull, 2021). The government decided to impose a national lockdown (the "stay at home" decree) that went into effect on March 11, when the number of positive Covid-19 cases exceeded 12,000 with over 800 deaths (De Lorenzo & Indini, 2020; Bocci, 2020; Ruffini, 2020). This dramatic situation persisted until data on Covid infections, began to decline

rapidly both as a result of lockdowns and lack of socialisation in attendance and because the onset of the first high temperatures in May 2020, stopped the spread of the virus. Under a government decree law, on May 18, 2020, all work and recreational activities were reopened and travel within regions, not between regions, was allowed: only from June 3, 2020, was travel between regions allowed.

As Italy began to ease restrictions in May 2020, lockdowns became commonplace throughout Europe especially in those European countries with harsher climates (WHO, 2020). One of the few public services of the Italian State that did not resume their activities in attendance in May 2020, were schools. Italian students from March 2020, resumed classes in school in September 2020. During this period, excluding summer vacation, students followed lessons remotely from home (D.A.D. in Italian/remote lessons) as about 6.7 million students were able to follow digital education (Scuola 24, 2020; D'Elia, 2022). According to D'Elia (2022), in-presence socialisation as well as in-school classes were interrupted in a few days and replaced by remote classes in virtual rooms (D.A.D.), procuring trauma and stress in students residing in Italy that had been unprecedented in the history of Italy as a dramatic and unexpected event since the end of World War II (Bull, 2021). Students were forced to spend much more time at home, from March 2020 until June 2020, to attend virtual classes which from the beginning generated doubts about their effectiveness and appropriateness (Crepet, 2020; Recalcati, 2021b; Conto & coll., 2020; D'Elia, 2022). Meanwhile, the World Health Organization posted a video on Twitter praising the Italian response. 'Italy was the first Western country to be heavily affected by #COVID19.

The Italian government and community at all levels responded strongly and reversed the trajectory of the Covid with a series of science-based measures' (World Health Organization, 2020). The summer of 2020 saw a virtual disappearance of the virus, leading to illusions that Italy had defeated the pandemic. In the early days of October 2020, Covid infection data resumed a rapid rise (De Lorenzo & Indini, 2020; Bocci, 2020). A decree approved on November 3, 2020, re-established three levels of restrictions for the regions: yellow (curfew after 10 p.m., closure of museums and

theaters), orange (the categories mentioned in the yellow color plus bars, restaurants, and any open or indoor place tended to socialize), and red (total blockade of non-core activities, school closures, traffic banned).

Against the backdrop of the worsening pandemic situation, on November 17, 2020, the Italian government took its regionalisation policy a step further by allowing regional governments to vary the level of restrictions (according to the three levels) for individual provinces. The government deferred to single regions the power to establish red zones (Bull, 2021). Italians celebrated Christmas and the end of 2020 with a series of restrictions that were in fact three consecutive semi-confinements: the winter of 2021 led to a reinstatement of red zones in almost all Italian regions, resulting in school closures. So doing, Italian students had become familiar with the term D.A.D. (distance learning/remote lessons) with which they attended classes from home for almost the entire 2021 school year (D'Elia, 2022; Remote lessons, <https://www.rainews.it/archivio-rainews/articoli/Sondaggio-scuole-il-92-per-cento-ha-attivato-didattica-a-distanza-ma-meta-degli-studenti-rimasti-esclusi-8d9c8d93-5975-4a0a-81b0-245cd72a64b3.html>). The government's restrictive actions began to spark widespread debate and much controversy, namely whether these were appropriate or excessive. In the following part of this chapter, I investigate the factors that led the Italian government to reimpose the numerous lockdowns that lasted until 2022 and the resulting school closures. Briefly, in this research project, I try to reconstruct the dramatic events that followed from the breakout of the pandemic from Covid and the policy decisions that led to the decision to close schools following the pandemic data at the regional level. The school closures, I highlight in this thesis, then had consequences for the mental health of the students, who were deprived of socialisation and the school environment.

In addition, I underline how students by being stuck at home for months had no opportunity for recreational and sports activities. Nevertheless, while taking into account these negative effects, the reasons that the government presented to the national and international press, on the use of the numerous lockdowns, was the high mortality rate due to Covid infections. Data from ISTAT and the National Institute of

Health still showed to this day that in the period between the first discovered case of Covid (Feb. 20, 2020) and the end of March 2020, deaths rose from an average of 65,592 in 2015-2019 for each year to 90,946 in 2020, a 38 percent increase (Bocci, 2020; Ruffino, 2020).

ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) compared deaths at the municipal level (6,866 municipalities, or 87 percent of the total number) for the first three months of 2020. Deaths in the 36 northern Italian provinces doubled, with considerable increases in some of them: Bergamo (+568%), Cremona (+391%), Lodi (+370%), Brescia (+290%), Piacenza (+264%) and Parma (+208%). The high mortality rate, as Bocci (2020) pointed out, has prompted considerable debate in Italy, as in other countries, about the effectiveness of the government's response and the quality of decisions made. Bocci (2020) states that Italy was at risk of having 1 to 2 million infected people with 200,000-400,000 hospitalizations and of these, 60,000-120,000 it was estimated, in intensive care with a maximum available number of intensive care equal to 8,000 beds in hospitals (De Lorenzo, & Indini, 2020; Bocci, 2020). The Italian State did not have the necessary infrastructure to handle such a large scale scenario. In this situation, the only alternative was 'territorial containment' of the virus through a mix of internal border controls and generic restrictions (Ruffino, 2020; Statista, 2021).

The Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Stringency Index shows that Italy imposed the strictest restrictions in Europe between January 31 and May 4, 2020. In the two months between March 10 and May 4, 2020, Italy was rated more stringent than China, and on April 12, it reached a "stringency index" of 93.52 (one of the highest in the world) maintained until May 4, 2020 (<https://ourworldindata.org/covid-stringency-index>). In the pandemic context in Italy between 2020 and 2022, students paid the highest price as a result of the lockdowns. People over the age of 18 were allowed to leave their homes for work or to buy food. Students, unable to allege such reasons, were confined to their homes to attend classes remotely, without having the opportunity to spend time in outdoor spaces for months (D'Elia, 2022).

Remote classes during the pandemic and the impact on students' lives

I investigate in this part of chapter 5, the remote lessons that took place during the pandemic context and its consequences on Italian students. This section has relevance in this research project because part of the theoretical framework leans on the scientific evidence based on the literature related to the study of the phenomenon of pre-Covid indoorisation, during and after the Covid and its effects on the physical-mental health of students residing in Italy.

In addition, I explore in depth the events that occurred in Italy during the pandemic that saw Italian students placed in the condition of spending much more time at home than their pre-Covid daily habits. The indoorisation trend, due to remote classes and numerous lockdowns, accelerated sharply in the years 2020-2022. This long period of social distancing and detachment from the school setting has had repercussions on both students' mental health and the resumption of outdoor activities, which I will investigate in the following sections. As investigated in the previous section of this chapter, many educational institutions of all levels began using remote lessons (D.A.D) since the first pandemic wave even if with some greater difficulty in Southern Italy (D'Elia, 2022; Remote lessons in Italy, <https://www.rainews.it/archivio-rainews/articoli/Sondaggio-scuole-il-92-per-cento-ha-attivato-didattica-a-distanzama-meta-students-remorse-excluded-8d9c8d93-5975-4a0a-81b0-245cd72a64b3.html>).

Scholar and psychiatrist Massimo Recalcati (La Stampa, 2021b) states that the forced and sudden loss of school community, has reinforced an almost autistic use of socials. As Recalcati (2021b) points out, remote classes were a heroic resistance to the destruction of in-presence relationships imposed by the health emergency. These were the only chance to maintain some form of contact between classroom mates and teachers. However, indefinitely prolonging remote classes (D.A.D) meant making a state of exception, the rule. Recalcati (2021b) highlights that it was essential for school to resume in attendance, albeit in a pandemic context. School is not only the place

where notions are transmitted and constructed together, as Recalcati (2021b) claims, but it is the place where life is formed in the context of a didactic and social relationship which, in addition to the teacher-pupil relationship, implies the relationship with a community. If social or virtual schooling replaces the bonds that are created in presence, this can result in a troubling addiction (Crepet, 2020; Recalcati, 2021a; Recalcati, 2021b, Crepet 2023)).

In this section of the chapter, I investigate the issues that emerged during the first remotely attended classes including the lack of computers or devices to follow lessons from home, the lack of technological skills on the part of both students and teachers. Last, I investigate Italian families' perceptions of the use and usefulness of remote lessons. In Italy, most children and adolescents, routinely used digital technologies and internet access was common in daily life before lockdowns, albeit with significant differences between northern Italy and the South and parts of the islands (remote lessons in Italy, 2020). A nationally representative survey conducted in 2017 states that 88 percent of children and young people in Italy between the ages of 9 and 16 years old are used to using the internet at home every day (Mascheroni & coll., 2021).

However, the lockdowns due to the pandemic, changed the way children and youth were confronted with the internet and digital technologies (Conto & coll., 2020; Mascheroni & coll., 2021). Access to the internet became vital for remotely following lessons, as well as ownership of technological devices in the home setting. Many families purchased new devices, which were necessary to enable multiple family members to go online at the same time, as it could happen that both parents (working by remote) and children (classes by remote) needed access to the internet via computers or tablets.

The role of the parents, as outlined by several researchers (Pastori, G., Mangiatordi, A., Pagani, V., & Pepe, A, 2020), was important in helping their children in the early stages of remote lessons to help them learn the new online teaching. However, another study conducted by other researchers (Brossard, M., Cardoso, M.,

Kamei, A., Mishra, S., Mizunoya, S., Reuge, N., 2020; Canzi, E. & coll., 2021), states that many parents found themselves the first to have difficulty accessing the new virtual realities, not being able to help their children or with the latter having helped their parents.

This new condition placed Italian families under considerable stress because they perceived that they were unable to cope with the use of new technologies and could not always help their children in remote lessons (Mascheroni & coll., 2021; Canzi & coll., 2021). These states of frustration and anxiety on the part of Italian families, occurred less in cases where at least one parent was present during remote lessons (Musso, P., & Cassibba, R., 2020; Mascheroni & coll., 2021). In a following section of this chapter, I dedicate some attention to cases in which Italian students, on the other hand, were left to their own devices to attend classes remotely without the presence of their parents and the consequences on their mental and behavioral health (Langhi & coll., 2022).

In certain geographical areas of Italy, parents themselves have had to compensate for the lack of internet connection by becoming their children's teachers in turn due to the lack of connection, absence of lessons from school or the shortage of computers and devices (D'Elia, 2022; Remote lessons in Italy, 2020). This state of events, although present especially during the first lockdown and then overcome thanks to the experiences in the previous months, left signs of anxiety and frustration within all members of Italian families (Musso, & Cassibba, 2020; Canzi, E. & coll., 2021).

Remote lessons were initially perceived as necessary and useful by Italian parents. Nevertheless, as the pandemic condition continued, it became clearer to the parents themselves that prolonged use of remote classes brought with it significant inconvenience and disaffection to school by their children (Musso & Cassibba, 2020; Pastori, Mangiatordi, Pagani, & Pepe, 2020; Mascheroni & coll., 2021).

The consequences of lockdowns on the mental health of Italian students

In this section, I investigate how several researches that occurred on the Italian territory, carried out immediately after the first lockdown, analyzed the consequences on the mental health of Italian students and other uneasiness that emerged.

The University of Palermo sponsored a research called '*I care*' (UNIPA: <https://www.unipa.it/PROGETTO-I-CARE>, 2020). The findings of the study show that during the period of the first lockdown in Italy, between March and May 2020, 35 % of adolescents experienced feelings of anxiety and unease, 32 % low levels of optimism and 50 % low expectations for the future and developed a strong depressive state. The University of Parma, at the same time as the first 2020 lockdown, conducted a study involving 2,996 Italian students attending junior and senior high school.

The research involved almost all students in the 20 regions of Italy. High levels of sadness emerged in the study results (84 percent of girls, 68.2 percent of boys). In particular, the lack of school context, was perceived as the most recurrent cause of sadness in girls more than for boys, (26.5% vs. 16.8%; $p < 0.001$). At the same time, this study highlighted that suffering more from anxiety, depression, and apathy, were boys living in southern regions (26.45% vs. 20.2%; $p < 0.01$) and for the group of adolescents 14-19 years old (24.2% vs. 14.7%; $p < 0.001$), when compared with the 11-13 age group (79.2% vs. 70.2%) - (Esposito & coll., 2021). The data from the research study, highlight that girls (more than boys) and adolescents (more than pre-teens), appear to be particularly affected by the negative effects resulting from lockdowns on their mental health.

The final results of the research, similar to those conducted by UNIPA 2020, highlight that the students interviewed attribute their increased states of anxiety, states of depression, eating disorders, and difficulties in maintaining a regular sleep-wake state to the lack of school setting and lack of socialisation in attendance, in addition to the semi-confinement they were placed (Esposito & coll., 2021). Both results of the studies reviewed above, highlighted the onset in students of problems related to

increased anxiety, depression, and other discomforts; other research, on the other hand, emphasized the onset of alcohol consumption by adolescents semi-confined at home.

The prolonged condition of staying at home during lockdowns has led a number of the Italian students to abuse alcoholic substances to cope with the discomforts of being semi-confined at home (Langhi & coll., 2022). To have a better comprehension of this new phenomenon suffered by Italian students related to prolonged lockdowns, I investigate studies on alcohol consumption concerning Italian adolescents in the pre-pandemic period (Struzzo et al, 2006; Scafato & coll., 2010). conducted by some researchers as Cricket et al., (2020), claim that there was a definite increase during lockdowns in alcohol consumption by adolescents semi-confined at home. The findings of these studies consistently indicated that young adults was the age group most at risk of experiencing anxiety and substance use, such as alcohol, during quarantine to cope with this new emergent state (Gili & coll., 2021). Furthermore, with regard to the pandemic context, living alone during quarantine was found to be associated with more frequent drinking alone (Wardell et al., 2020). This evidence could suggest that when bars and other venues were closed to prevent the spread of Covid, people living alone at home began drinking, or drinking more, to cope with the enforced loneliness, boredom, and discomfort associated with the pandemic (Wardell et al., 2020).

Alcohol consumption, the study highlights, among young adults during lockdowns also varied depending on living arrangements and parental presence. Pre-pandemic studies, some of which can be referable outside Italian borders, but still comparable to the youth age groups involved in lockdowns in Italy, observed that pre-pandemic young adults, living with their parents, abused alcohol less (Dawson et al., 2004; Struzzo et al, 2006; Scafato & coll., 2010). These findings suggest that alcohol abuse may be reduced by direct exposure to parental supervision (Langhi & coll., 2022). The latter factor being lacking in those Italian families who were unable to assist their children because they were present at work, during classes that were held remotely.

The mental health consequences related to different ages

I explore in this section of the chapter some findings from research completed between 2020 and 2021 in Italy, which reveal the categories of people associated with a different age range who suffered more from lockdowns and others, on the other hand, who developed fewer issues inherent to mental health. The research, conducted by a group of researchers, Ceccato & coll., (2021), highlighted that the focus group with the highest age (60-85 years) was the age group that showed the most positive attitude toward the emergency, overcoming it, revealing that they developed less uneasiness than the other focus groups of different ages, but all younger: 18-29 years and 30-50 years.

Ceccato et al., (2021), pointed out through the final results of their work that the older group stated, in contrast to the two younger focus groups, that they maintained their daily habits, carried on contact with their network of friends through phone calls (or in presence, although not legal at that time). In addition, the older focus group (60-85 years old) claimed to have used smartphones and devices for only a few minutes a day, mainly because they were not comfortable with the use of this type of technology. This research highlights that the three different focus groups implemented different strategies to cope with the empty time due to lockdowns and that the type of communication methods for maintaining contact with their network of friendships, was not the same (Ceccato et al., 2021). Although many members of the older focus group also claimed to have suffered from loneliness, states of anxiety or states of worry did not emerge as high as those found in the younger groups, but rather the opposite.

Ceccato et al., (2021), state that the lower worries, stated by the older group, also stemmed from the factor that they had no particular expectations for the future. This factor differs from what was stated by the other two younger focus groups, who expressed a strong concern for the future related to both economic and health-related uncertainty (Ceccato & coll., 2021). The results of the previously mentioned research

studies, leveraged a focus group that was not particularly large, so it is difficult to discern whether the results are representative for the entire Italian population. In this vein, another study on mental health as a result of lockdowns conducted in Italy that also included the older population, concluded partially different final results (Prati, 2021). This study, however, did not divide the people involved in the research by age group.

Whilst, acknowledging that several international researches have indicated that the highest occurrence of anxiety and depression among the global population hit by Covid has been found in Italy, Luo et al., (2020), Prati (2021) states that the results of his research are in line with those of other previous studies showing an association between media use and devices, and psychological distress during a pandemic (Chao et al., 2020). According to Prati (2021), he relates his research findings to those of scholar Chao (2020), reconnecting with the fact that media exposure and the emergence of mental uneasiness, may be present not only during a pandemic, but also in any other context considered 'normal'. The link between the findings of the different researches, is to underline the connections between mental health problems and exposure to devices and socials. Common considerations emerge that older populations, are the least exposed to mental health problems during a pandemic context, because they are less accustomed to the use of devices, especially in its newer versions (Ceccato et al., 2021; Chao, 2020; Prati, 2021).

The pandemic and the decrease in physical activity during and after lockdowns

In this section of Chapter 5, I deepen the consequences that some research has revealed on the physical health of Italian students as a result of lockdowns. A study on the consequences on physical health carried out by Saulle R, Minozzi S, Amato L, Davoli M. (2021) highlights the change in habits related to physical activity, eating habits and sleep quality of a wide range of Italian students during and after the first year of lockdowns.

The studies are comparative with surveys conducted in other countries and related to the results found in Italy. These studies were conducted in 14 countries, the majority in Italy (30.9%) and the United Kingdom (30.9%) and underline the similar conclusions found. The findings of the study highlight how around 80% of those surveyed in Italy were forced to live indoors for much longer and consequently ate unhealthy food, changed their sleep-wake rhythms, and no longer engaged in physical activity for long periods often corresponding to lockdowns. Saulle, Minozzi, Amato and Davoli (2021) related a number of cross-sectional studies from different countries that arrived at findings similar to those found in Italy. The final conclusions of the studies from the United States, Scotland and India reported a reduced level of physical activity during lockdowns with a range of 36-47% of children and young people (6-18 years), with a reduction of up to 52% of daily physical activity in a sample of Spanish children (mean age 9.6 years). These final conclusions are similar to those found in Italian children.

In addition, the comparative study by Saulle, Minozzi, Amato and Davoli (2021), underlines the relationship that emerged between increased time spent with tablets and PC and the drastic decrease in physical activity by Italian students aged between 6 and 18 years. Furthermore, in this comparative study, it emerged that the Italian interviewees stated that they experienced more problems with sleep in particular in falling asleep, a sleep that was often fragmented and not regular with

awakenings often shifted more towards unusual times (Saulle, Minozzi, Amato and Davoli, 2021). Nevertheless, the Italian Istituto Superiore di Sanita (ISS) also highlighted the consequences on the physical activity of Italian adolescents after two years of the Pandemic.

The ISS report reveals that less than one in 10 young people engage in physical activity every day, and in addition, the Istituto Superiore di Sanità research states that this data has seen a general drastic decrease in hours of physical activity (age group 16-18 years), when compared to pre-Covid data (ISS: N°08/2023). At the same time, a 2023 report by the Italian Society of Paediatrics states that 81% of adolescents do not have adequate levels of physical activity (Annual Report Italian Society of Paediatrics, 2023). With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, physical activity has declined further, the final results found in Italy state. In addition, the previously mentioned report in its survey noted the fact that the steady resumption of physical activity in children between 6 and 12 years of age encountered many discomforts and setbacks in the restart phases. This occurred in particular as a consequence of the numerous lockdowns that followed in Italy and that did not allow regular physical activity to take place for two years, favouring the emergence of phenomena linked to obesity and overweight (Rapporto annuale Società Italiana di Pediatria, 2023).

As initially noted above, the study relates that during the pandemic period, as physical activity decreased, there was an increase in the percentage of overweight/obesity in adolescents.

Theoretical framework: how to resume experiential activities in attendance and overcome uneasiness from lockdowns isolation.

I investigate in this section of Chapter 5 the possible issues on which psychologists and psychiatrists are formulating their questions regarding the resume of in-presence experiential activities by Italian students and the help that might be needed. Whilst, the 2022-2023 school year is the first year since February 2020 that no more semi-confinement of Italian students has been required since the pandemic has become endemic and there has been no upsurge in Covid infections. 'The direct effect of the pandemic is the so-called post-traumatic adaptation disorder,' so claims Massimo Recalcati (2021a) in an interview with an Italian national newspaper (La Repubblica, 2021a).

The scholar and psychologist Recalcati (2021a), states that after months of semi-confinement, some Italian students may find it difficult to regain the social dimension in attendance in the school community, adequately. Returning to the outdoors, to 'normal' life is not a liberation for everyone, state Crepet (2020) and Recalcati (2021a). Doing so, for some, indoor life coincides with a feeling of protection. 'Prison' has become a refuge and it is difficult to 'live' without it. In addition, social distancing has introduced, as Recalcati (2021a) points out, the idea that my fellow man may be 'the site of transmission of evil' because I am no longer used to his presence. It is therefore a matter of recovering trust in relationships. It is a task that concerns individual life, but also collective life.

The trauma of the pandemic has spared no one, causing different conditions of discomfort. According to Recalcati (2021b, 2023), he states that the discomfort in children, were greatly mitigated by the presence of parents: for them the affective world revolves around their family. If a sufficiently good family environment was ensured, the child's internal world was safeguarded. Different is the condition of adolescents. Their life is outdoors, it is contact between bodies, detachment from their family, adventure in the world. All this was conditioned by the imposed social

distance. In addition, the Italian psychiatrist argues that a tendency we saw already present in adolescents before Covid, has been reinforced. Now, in a post-Covid condition, a greater phobic withdrawal, a closure in one's room, a depressive withdrawal is present (Recalcati, 2021a, 2021b) as well as a diminished desire to imagine (2023).

Social media played an essential function in the time of lockdown by allowing the presence of ties, albeit virtual. However, after months of isolation as Recalcati notes (2021a, 2021b), the socials tend to replace ties in presence. This is a troubling addiction that also involves the adult world. If socials originally had the function of broadening our ties to the world, their use now goes in the opposite direction: a narrowing of the world.

The psychiatrist Crepet (2020), points out how D.A.D. from being a means considered salvific as soon as the pandemic broke out, has turned into a kind of cage because it is prolonged too long. Crepet (2020), highlights that remotely taught classes can bring with them considerable damage on students' mental health. The moment a child, as Crepet (2020) outlines, believes that the only way to communicate is in a virtual mode, he or she may grow autistic (not literally) because they will not have used his or her senses, at least not all of them, or not as they would have in the presence of friends.

Continues the psychiatrist, who states that a failure to socialise in presence for too long will lead to difficulties in reactivating them once it is possible (Crepet, 2020).

In this new context of post-Covid normalcy, it is possible to seek an answer to the following questions:

-The Italian students, will they be able to resume activities in attendance and in outdoor spaces as they did before the pandemic?

-Will students be able to independently regain the stimuli and motivation to resume the life they were leading until February 2020,

which already saw them spending less hours on outdoor experiential activities?

-Will students residing in Italy, recognise the outdoors as the places for a shared experience with their friends?

-Will students, see the outdoors as a place for deepening and learning about the concepts of biodiversity and sustainability that are most discussed in the wake of the pandemic?

The potential for the development of outdoor education in Italy after the pandemic

In this section of Chapter 5, I investigate the potential for the development of outdoor education in Italy after Covid. In the previous chapters, I have tried to highlight the reasons that have not favored outdoor education to become a subject matter as it has already occurred in other European countries. The reasons I have found have been numerous and these have persisted for decades, yet it is possible that after the Covid pandemic, new scenarios favorable to outdoor education will open up. In previous chapters of this PhD thesis, I pointed out that before Covid, new generations in Italy, as in the rest of the western side, lived less time in contact with nature preferring indoor spaces resulting in less experiential activity in the outdoors (Rivkin, 2000; Louv, 2005; Van Bottenbourg, & Lotte, 2010; Farné, 2014, 2018; Bortolotti, 2019).

Doing so, it was pointed out that in Italy it was Italian students who paid the highest price during the lockdowns because they were not allowed to leave home citing needs, like being able to buy food, or go to work. Students residing in Italy for months were forced to attend classes (of all grades) remotely while remaining at home (Conto & coll., 2020; Musso & Cassibba, 2020; Brossard & coll., 2020; Mascheroni & coll., 2021; D'Elia, 2022). The mental health consequences associated with these

extended periods experienced at home, with students often connected for hours to virtual realities, are emerging with the first studies conducted after the first national lockdown, which occurred between March and May 2020.

Other studies, as a result of the lockdowns that occurred on a regional basis after September 2020, allow us to study the negative consequences on the mental health of both students and the Italian population in general (Ignazi, 2020; Celotto, 2020; Prati, 2021; Gili & coll., 2021; Langhi & coll., 2022). The final findings of these studies, highlight that the lack of socialisation in attendance, the lack of the school context and the obligation to stay at home without experiencing outdoors spaces anymore, this new condition led the onset in children of anxiety states, depression, eating disorders, wake-sleep disorders, possible consumption of alcoholic beverages and difficulty in resuming outdoor activities as they used to do before the pandemic (UNIPA, 2020; Esposito et al, 2021; Gili & coll., 2021; Langhi & coll., 2022).

The final results of these researches, suggest that it is plausible to assume that some students will find it difficult to reconsider open spaces as the places to have direct experiences, after having lived their lives for about two years with the filter of a computer screen or devices. In this new post-pandemic context, the competent authorities related to the world of education, the research done on students' mental health, can make them become more aware of the state of the art that involves with different roles, all those who gravitate to the educational sphere, but especially the national legislature.

Outdoor education in this post-pandemic phase, may find a greater space in the educational sphere with the aim of helping especially those students who have suffered the most from prolonged lockdowns, but in general for all those who attend schools in rediscovering the pleasure of a life lived more in contact with nature and the infinite potential of learning that can take place through direct experiences lived in the outdoors. The states of anxiety, depression and other discomforts that arose during the pandemic, state the researchs so far completed, can be traced to the condition of isolation perpetrated for months and a communication that occurred

through the filter of the newest communication technology. Experiential activities in contact with one's peers in naturalistic settings, without the intermediation of devices, may be one answer to address the state of uneasiness with which our children have emerged since the pandemic.

Summary

In this Chapter 5, as a result of the in-depth analysis and research of the 8 sections of which it is composed, I have developed a theoretical framework that was initially based on the investigation of the indoorisation phenomenon inherent in the new generations, prior to Covid. This initial section of the chapter, plays an important role in this research project since through the prior studies of several scholars, I have highlighted that the new generations spend less time outdoors than previous generations.

This phenomenon has been increasing since the last decade of the 20th century and is related to multiple factors. Following this line, I have analysed in the next sections of this chapter, the effects on mental health resulting from the lockdowns that occurred with the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. Forced indoor living, due to external factors, has characterized the lives of Italian students for nearly two years. I investigated the initial studies done on some students who lived indoors for months during the lockdowns; the initial findings of this research show that forced living at home led to increased anxiety, depression, eating disorders and in some cases alcohol consumption.

In addition, I highlighted how many young people living in Italy, have difficulty resuming outdoor activities as they were used to before covid and socializing in presence. I investigated how some psychologists and psychiatrists have highlighted that for some young people, specific help will be needed so that they can overcome the trauma resulting from the semi-confinements and cope with the mental health consequences. In this current post-pandemic phase (2023), in which the virus in some countries including Italy has become endemic, I have made suggestions on how outdoor education, thanks to experiential activities in the outdoors, this subject matter already present in some European countries, can play an important role in helping students residing in Italy to resume experiential activities in the outdoors based on the places.

Chapter 6: The Reggio-Emilia approach: from Dewey's thought to the direct experiences that have points of contact with a pedagogy of place in Reggio-Emilia

Introduction

In this opening section of the sixth chapter, I explore the historical context that saw the emergence of Dewey's thought as a result of the social and cultural changes that characterized the countries of the western side in the early 1900s, but especially after World War II. I delve into the fact that new rights, such as voting for almost citizens in certain countries, brought to the fore the importance of giving an education to the entire population and not just those who could pay for private schools for their children. In the second section of the chapter, I investigate how Dewey's thought underpins pedagogical methods that emerged after World War II and had Dewey's writings and ideas published in 1916 and 1938 as a point of reference. I highlight how these concepts were taken up and refined in both outdoor education and the emerging Reggio-approach.

At this stage, I focus on the fact that the Reggio-approach puts the child's interests at the center of its practices and begins with the child for the construction of new knowledge that takes place among peers and with educators who are no longer those who transmit knowledge, but rather become facilitators in bringing to life an abundance of new experiences together with children. In this penultimate section of the chapter I point out how Loris Malaguzzi, in the post-World War II historical context that saw the city of Reggio-Emilia destroyed by the war, gave life to the Reggio-approach using the few economic means that the current situation offered.

The local area became the place to propose direct experiences for the pupils, considering also the economic conditions of Reggio families in the post-war context. In the last section of this chapter, I explore how the pedagogical methodology conducted in Reggio-Emilia has been taken as an example in other countries such as

Iceland which sees on its territory, a school that draws on the pedagogical concepts of both Reggio-approach and Slow-Food presidi.

John Dewey statement

‘Perhaps the most neglected branch of history in general education is intellectual history. We begin to realize that the great heroes who have advanced mankind are not the politicians, generals, etc., but the scientific discoverers and explorers who have placed in man's hands the instruments of a controlled and developing experience, and the artists and poets have celebrated their struggles, triumphs, and defeats, in a language which, whether pictorial, plastic, or written, has made their understanding universal and accessible to others’ (Dewey, 2004, p. 237).

Dewey's thinking and the social changes of western side societies and the impact on educational thinking

The early years of the twentieth century saw the emergence of various campaigns for more rights and the political emancipation of the masses; between the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of World War II, the enlargement of the number of people who benefited from the right to vote for the first time in their

lives, began. This change first involved Western countries with stages of moving towards the universal voting system, with very different timelines.

On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was approved in the United States, introducing universal suffrage for the first time (Dubois, 1998). In Italy men's suffrage in 1912 although still on the basis of census, women's suffrage on June 2, 1946 on the occasion of the vote between monarchy and democracy (Rubechi, 2016). The democratization of the vote led to the request, by the masses, to have access to the rights previously recognized only to a few citizens; among these was the request for access to a universal school system so that even the children of those who until then had not taken part in political life, could obtain a change in their social condition in a better sense thanks to an educational system no longer based on the family's wealth, but on the merit of the individual (Dewey, 1916, 1938).

With the advent of compulsory schooling, came the expectation that learning would become the main activity of everyone's children and not just of a small niche. The idea that everyone had the right to learn because learning is important in itself, did not take hold in Western societies until after the Second World War, so Dewey's statement 'the separation between theory and practice, corresponds precisely to the division between educated and working people' (Dewey, 1900, p. 42), was based on an analysis of the status quo of societies at that time.

School and education became central themes in the political debate in the second half of the twentieth century, but Dewey had anticipated them in his writing *Democracy and Education* in 1916, asserting that it was the task of the school environment to rebalance the different elements of the social environment in which one lived and to provide that each individual had the opportunity to escape the limitations of the social group in which he was born and to come into living contact with a wider environment with an abundance and greater possibility of experiences to perpetrate (Dewey, 1916, 1938).

In other words, it was necessary to compensate for any socio-environmental discomfort by offering each child a wide range of opportunities to meet, exchange and participate in the social environment par excellence: the school. For an accomplished

democracy to be such, it is more than just a form of government. It is, first and foremost, a certain kind of associated life, of continuously communicated experience, and when a state does not guarantee free access to an educational system for all, it cannot be called *de facto* democratic, it is democratic only in form, but not in substance.

Dewey's (1900, 1916) progressive ideas in the field of education have been taken up and revived in various stages by politicians, thinkers and pedagogues in various countries in Europe and beyond, which has led to an expansion of the right to use school services, with compulsory schooling becoming progressively more widespread, which has seen its greatest expansion, for example, in Scandinavian countries with compulsory attendance up to the age of 18 and the cost of studies being borne by the State (Torsten, 1973). It is conceivable how almost all democratic countries, especially after the 1950s, have adopted this line of thinking in the field of education, but today there are still considerable differences and disparities. Developing countries have not yet adopted a universal educational system for all their citizens, often for economic reasons.

At the same time, even in Western countries, there are still significant differences depending on which country is being referred to (in the States, the quality of the national public educational service does not reach that of the private educational system). Once the principle of a universal education system became established between World War I and World War II, thanks to the thinking of philosophers and educators including Dewey (1916, 1938) and Montessori (1949, 1950), the debate shifted to what kind of educational model should be adopted in countries that democratized their educational systems.

Dewey argued that the model used up to the beginning of the 20th century was inadequate in the face of the considerable changes that American society was undergoing and that the traditionalist-transmissive model was outdated and out of step with the times, as can be seen from Dewey's writings (1916, 1938); the child had to become the focus and start from what are his or her interests, with a different role for the educator-teacher, that is, with a function of scaffolding and no longer transmissive of content towards a child who received it passively.

Even the idea of who the educator was had to change, because education was not only about who educated, but also about communities, which could become educating communities; the American philosopher-pedagogue insisted a great deal on the attention that the educator must devote to the creation of the educational environment, so that a space for the interaction of relationships is created, available to expand the possibilities of experience, according to Dewey's thinking and highlighted by scholars Quay and Seaman (2013).

The importance of the educating community and the type of setting where the child interacts as a social environment, as well as being milestones in Dewey's thinking, will also become cornerstones in the Reggio-approach and outdoor education. Dewey's thought is connected to evolutionism and American pragmatism; he places the concrete experience of man as the fundamental basis of culture and knowledge. The experience must be considered as something that tends to actively modify the natural environment as well as the social one, so that one can project oneself towards future actions, not limiting oneself to be considered as a passive reception of sensible impressions coming from the outside (Dewey, 1916, 1938).

Education must be centered on forms of practical, social and cultural activity that allow the school and other institutions to reproduce in an amplified way in the world in which we live, that richness and immediacy of experiences that bring about change. Education thus becomes the place where the transition between organism and environment, play and work, philosophy and science takes place, so that new spaces of freedom are created, but above all it is an education of the here and now, education as a process of living and not a preparation for future living. We are always living in our time and not in another; only by extracting in each moment the full meaning of each present experience, we prepare ourselves to do the same in the future: this thought is recurrent in both Dewey (1916, 1938) and Mead (1996).

This is the only preparation that in the long run leads to something different between the present (now) and the future (what will be different). The pedagogical thought elaborated by Dewey, very synthesized in 'learning by doing', has its value only if the actions done in the present will make their influence felt on the future; the people who have an idea of the connection between the two periods mentioned above,

‘present-future’, are those who have reached maturity. They are responsible for creating the conditions for the kind of present experience that will have a favorable and changing effect on the future (Dewey, 1900, 1916).

The central problem of an experience-based education is to choose the kind of present experience that will be fruitful and creative in the experiences that follow. The unfolding experience lies between an imbalance that exists between the past that must be known, the change of life in the present, and a different future to be constructed and experienced (Dewey, 1916, 1938). With respect to this vision of educational temporality, the importance of the relationship between Dewey and G. H. Mead is felt, who also stated: ‘the present happens in a perspective for a future different from what is happening now’ (Mead, 1996, p. 41). The progressive pedagogical-educational thinking reported in Dewey's and Mead's earlier statements may seem obvious to those who attended schools in a democracy. Several decades after the publication of *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Experience and Education* (1938), this was not the case for all those who attended schools (only for those who had the opportunity) before this philosophical-pedagogical imprint took hold in some Western countries, just as it is not taken for granted that democratic educational models have laid their foundations on the idea of experiential activity. An experience is effectively educational only if it is fruitful because it is the creator of future experiences that will follow. In this regard, it is important to recall the historical phase mentioned earlier, which saw only in democracies the ability to promote a greater quality of education and therefore of human experience, because democracies make possible quality educational experiences accessible to all its citizens, as opposed to non-democracies, which promise quality experiences only and exclusively to a part of society chosen by direct knowledge by the oligarchies in power, as Dewey states in his writing *Democracy and Education* (1916).

Breaking the traditionalist thought of a school that transmits knowledge has required and still requires considerable effort, because continuing as we have always done is reassuring and does not call into question the figures of the teacher-educators of every order and level up to the University and does not produce uncertainty, since we are simply asked to slavishly repeat what we have done before. Dewey's

revolutionary thought starts from the idea that one can learn from experience, from something new that was not experienced until then, and through reflection on what has been done, one expects a change in one's behavior, that is, a different way of dealing with a future experience, taking into account the reflection made on past experience:

'An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory' simply because it is only in experience that a theory can have any vital and verifiable meaning. An experience, a very humble experience, is capable of containing and generating any amount of theory (or intellectual content), but a theory outside of experience cannot ultimately be grasped even as a theory' (Dewey, 1916, p. 144).

The idea of experience, as Dewey's quote (1916) above points out, presupposes a social environment in which to carry out these actions, which can be the school (static environment) or an outdoor environment to be experienced as an experiential activity during an excursion (dynamic environment). An external natural environment also becomes a privileged setting because the stimuli that can be found there are greater than an indoor environment, which can have an atelier as a setting, but it cannot be changed every day, instead the external natural environment can be linked each time to a different geographical place and then with new stimuli every time you choose a different territory in which to carry out an experience (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958).

It is possible to note points of contact between Dewey's thinking and the Reggio Emilia approach, since in both there is always the pupil's interest as a starting point, so that there is a co-construction of new knowledge thanks also to what is called an 'occasional event' that must be grasped by the educator-teacher, since there is no rigid

curriculum but rather a flexible one (Fraser, 2012). What is described will be easier to occur in an external natural environment because it is always subject to becoming and change such as climatic-atmospheric events, or simply the different seasons that alternate in the same place of the experience that could be repeated, but it would never be the same because of unexpected events (Beames, 2010).

The use of the five senses outdoors, by the learner, are recurring elements in the experiential activity of outdoor education, which is often linked as a theoretical basis to the thought of Dewey (1938, 1939).

Points of contact between Dewey's thought, Reggio-approach educational philosophy and outdoor education

'Learning through direct experience has always been central to becoming a good citizen and, thanks to the influence of educational philosophers as John Dewey, has also become a core component of how we understand adventurous learning' (Beames, Mackie & Atencio, 2019, p. 139).

The above quote highlights the existing close bond between outdoor education and the foundations on which the principles and values of outdoor pedagogies are based. The outdoor practises allows a reflection, after the experience, of a different type compared to another experience that would take place in an indoor context, in which they could not intervene the wind, rain, a favorable climate-adverse, the smells and changing colors of nature related to the different seasons (Beames, 2010).

In the outdoor context, uncertainty, doubt, are all elements that characterize the philosophical-pedagogical currents mentioned so far, have more room for action and are more challenging and thus harbingers in generating a new awareness in the learner and also consequently the acquisition of new skills and capabilities, as well as greater self-confidence in one's own means and potential. In the external environment, safety cannot be guaranteed in advance, the invasion of the unknown can arouse the spirit of adventure.

Uncertainty can prompt us to leave our comfort zone and develop a new awareness of the circumstances present in that place at that time, so that we can then make new decisions. In these contexts, we cannot be certain in advance of our desired outcomes, but we can acquire new skills, capacities and knowledge through the experiences resulting from our choices. Outcomes do not need to be measured or assessed, thus risk as the 'main tool' in outdoor education, can be set aside, also considering how overused it has been in outdoor practices over the decades (Brown & Fraser, 2009). These concepts refer to an open-air pedagogy that cannot be reduced to a simple equation of predetermined inputs and outputs; this consideration implies that the attainment of new skills does not follow linear stages of learning and predetermined outcomes that must be achieved (Beames & Brown, 2016).

What is expected from an outdoor experiential experience, on the other hand, goes in the opposite direction, because the context fosters perplexity, confusion, doubt, all due to the fact that one is in an unfamiliar situation that requires some adaptations (Beames, 2010). Consequence is to decide a behavior according to the hypothesis put forward in the form of an action plan that applies to the existing circumstances, that is, to concretely do something without a predetermined plan, to cause the generation of a desired skill-competence, or better yet unexpected (Beames, Higgins & Nicol, 2012; Beames, & Brown, 2016).

Modern science considers the baggage of acquired knowledge (based on experimentation-action-experiential activity) only a means to learn, to discover, to go beyond what is known, to the discovery of what is unknown. To think effectively we need experiences, whether acquired or in action, which provide us with the elements to be able to deal with the present difficulty. According to Beames (2010), curiosity

is not an isolated accidental quality; it is a necessary consequence of the fact that experience is a changing, mutable thing, involving various connections with other things. Any experience, however trivial it may seem on the surface, can take on an indefinite wealth of meanings as one becomes aware of an increasing number of its possible connections: in this, nature is an unparalleled setting of stimuli and connective possibilities (Beames, 2010; Beames, & Brown, 2016).

The individual cannot exist without the relationship with the environment and consequently, this relationship cannot exist without the process that significantly binds human action to the environment, because it determines the reciprocal modifications, namely education. The '*place*' becomes a form of social life, a community in miniature, a community that has a continuous interaction with other opportunities for experience outside the walls of the school and revolves around a theory of experience, understood, the latter, as a place of relationship and mutual and two-way exchange between the subject and the social environment.

The environment can also develop a role as a third educator; this concept is present in Dewey's thinking, but it is also taken up and developed in the Reggio-approach because it furthers some of the cardinal principles of the Reggio-approach (R.E.A). Reggio-approach is based on collaboration, transparency, flexibility, relationship and reciprocity, the importance of organization of all spaces (both indoor and outdoor), and peer learning with the presence of an educator. The teacher/educator, firstly observes, secondly has the function of a facilitator in the co-construction of new knowledge. When creating an environment that serves as a third teacher, it is necessary to rely on the support of each of the principles listed above, as a whole and not individually (Fraser, 2012).

The environment thus becomes intertwined in the development of the child, so it is assumed that the metamorphosis of childhood can be understood as a dynamic dance between children and their environment. A fundamental element of Reggio-approach, based also on Dewey's thought, remains the metaphor in which the relationship of the child with the educator is compared to a game of ping-pong in which both players are led to participate in this exchange of relationships; by doing so, children in their learning environment feel more self-confident and become more

inclined and willing to take risks and extend their learning (Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016).

By using collaborative action to structure children's learning experiences, this approach leads to an alternative view of the child's image; the child becomes capable, powerful, and resourceful, and is essential in the Reggio-approach because children are seen as competent and capable of extremely complex ideas. In order for the environment to become the third educator, it is also important for educator-teachers to develop the pedagogy of listening, which requires everyone to slow down so that they are more likely to listen to children's expressed ideas, insights, and comments (Fyfe, 2011).

In a conversation with his friend Gandini, Loris Malaguzzi explains relationships as a dynamic conjunction of forces and elements interacting towards a common goal; for this to occur, there must be physical relationships in the classroom or in the external environment, social relationships among people, and intellectual relationships that are always marked by a mutual exchange of learning (Bocci, 2008; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016).

The Reggio-approach does not provide for the use of a specific curriculum to follow, since the setting, and in particular the outdoor setting, allows the emergence of a spontaneous curriculum, through the interaction between students and teachers, taking advantage of the occasional event, giving rise to new experiences not previously planned (Bocci, 2008; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016). This type of setting, inspired by socioconstructivism and Dewey's thinking, allows learners to be responsible for and the first actors in their own learning and gives educators time to observe and reflect on what children are interested in and how involved they are in what they do spontaneously.

In the Reggio-approach, the environment is the third teacher/educator because the spaces that are created can provide opportunities for experiences for lasting memories, thus maintaining a strong positive influence throughout life (Fraser, 2012). The setting set up by educators is designed to generate a positive effect in the adult life to come from the children involved. An active learning environment, as presented by environments that follow Reggio-approach principles and values, offers many

more choices and encourages children to discover a variety of materials as they explore, investigate and solve problems. This can occur by providing multiple sensory experiences to help them build memory based on pleasant shared moments experienced in community, such as a scavenger hunt or food preparation in the kitchen with the help of adults (Fraser, 2012).

The materials offered in these settings would have to be plentiful and have different characteristics and change very often over time. The question arises as to whether this is possible, and the answer cannot be positive because it would entail a very high cost, as well as a considerable production of waste materials that would not take into account issues of environmental sustainability. According to Quay and Seaman (2013), 'outdoor education initially offered an alternative to indoor education; now it has gained importance as it is seen as a bulwark against an impending environmental crisis' (p. 46).

Fostering learning in outdoor environments does not require new installations or changes in setting, but their simple use while maintaining a high respect for the nature of the place that allowed the experience to occur. Any natural environment changes on its own and does not need new materials (Beames, 2010; Beames, Higgins, & Nicol, 2012). It is useful to reflect on the petrochemical-derived tools often present in educational environments: if we are to develop education for sustainability, it is important to start with the kinds of materials that children can use.

This practice is rooted in the habits and customs of the historical period at the end of the 20th century that did not pay sufficient attention to environmental sustainability and awareness of climate change, all issues that can no longer be postponed. New materials can be discovered through possible excursions to areas near us, wherever we live, leveraging an education in camping that is reflected in several of Dewey's writings and highlighted by scholars Quay and Seaman (2013).

Principles and values in the Reggio-approach pedagogy

The Reggio-approach has been studied since the 1970s as a rather unique experience in Italy, as its pedagogical principles were founded by setting as a reference point the thought of Dewey, Ferrière, Vygotsky, Bruner and Piaget (Bobbio, 2008).

Loris Malaguzzi placed the child, his interests and passions at the center of his pedagogy. The '*hundred languages*' that a child can express and that an educator must know how to listen, belongs to the Reggio-approach pedagogical philosophy. A pedagogy based on the transfer of knowledge between educator and child was seen by Malaguzzi as a model to be surpassed and to be consigned to the past (Fyfe, 2011; Barbieri, 2017). Malaguzzi placed attention on the figure of the educator, who had to keep up with the times and thus break away from that image of a provider of knowledge (Bobbio, 2008; Barbieri, 2017). People working in education can be at the same time a new type of intellectuals and researchers, who experiment with new educational paths together with their students and choose together where to carry out experiential activities (Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016).

Uncertainty, flexibility, adapting to different contexts and thus adapting and adopting new curricula related to the places where people live, co-constructing new knowledge, are at the core of the Reggio-approach philosophy. These models are an alternative to what has been called 'prothetic pedagogy', which has also played a major role in some Western democracies that have seen their educational systems not start from the importance of the child and his interests/passions, but from a pedagogy that knew in advance everything that would happen, thus placing limits on experimentation because it was already known that the experience was wrong regardless. Prophetic pedagogy, as Malaguzzi (1971, 1995) pointed out, is particularly criticized because it knows everything that will happen, it has no uncertainty, it is absolutely imperturbable:

‘This is something so coarse, so cowardly, so humiliating of teachers'ingenuity, a complete

humiliation for children's ingenuity and potential' (Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016, p. 421).

Malaguzzi, differently, worked for a pedagogy that adapted to the needs of the child, a pedagogy of listening, of interpersonal relationships, but one that was always in step with the times toward what is occurring in society and in the world.

In the Reggio-approach there is a pedagogy centered on work done at the same pace between children and adults, where they work together to build values and their own identity, all in a dialogic relationship with others, which are all the actors that can be found in an educational context, from the educator to the cook (Bobbio, 2008; Barbieri, 2017; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016).

Loris Malaguzzi and the importance of learning through direct experiences based on the local landscape

Immediately after World War II, the Reggio-Emilia area had been subjected to the last resistance of Nazi-Fascist troops on the so-called *Gothic Line* between 1943-45 (Pallai, 1975; Ronchetti, 2009).

This resulted in considerable destruction of both the local economy and public buildings such as schools and dwellings of residents in those areas; the consequence was a great impoverishment of local families who had economic difficulties in meeting the expenses associated with their children's education (Canovi, 1990; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016). Malaguzzi also considered spring-summer outdoor camps to be set up in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines near Reggio Emilia, as well as indoor kindergarten structures, the special places as well as rich in natural materials that could be easily connected to a local cross-curriculum of the place explored. These direct experiences in the Reggio Emilia territory, were not expensive for local families and permitted an knowledge of the area itself, which became the site of experiences based on history, architecture, the local economy and with it the centuries-old traditions that had been formed in that specific areas.

The collection of natural materials that could be found during a hike in the Reggio Emilia Apennines were helpful in finding out how they were formed, what they are made of, what local economic sector they are used in, etc. (Frabboni & Borghi, 2017; Planillo, 2020). According to Malaguzzi (1995), the pedagogist and philosopher from Reggio-Emilia pointed out that:

'If children are helped to perceive themselves as authors, to discover the pleasure, the taste of investigating alone or

with friends and discovering new things unknown until then, children are able to make congruent efforts to have new experiences' (1995, p. 69).

The motivation and interest that children can develop are at the heart of Loris Malaguzzi's pedagogy, as highlighted in the quote above. Motivation for discovery can be most encouraged by the appropriate setting of spaces in which to carry out experiences and outdoor spaces have been underlined by Malaguzzi (Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016; Planillo, 2020).

The importance given to the local territory and how it could be learned through direct experiences, characterised Malaguzzi's thinking. Such beliefs were not only characteristic of the Reggio Emilia pedagogist's thinking, as they were quite common in post-World War II Italy. This derived both from the economic conditions of Italian families, who in the 1950s and 1960s could not afford the costs for their children in experiences and excursions far away from schools, and from the typical Italian cultural factor that sees one's territory where one is born, to be unique and characteristic and thus expresses a strong rootedness to it (Romanelli, 1991).

As a pedagogue and philosopher, it is possible to assert that Malaguzzi was a forerunner in Italy in proposing experiential activities based on the territory, with the aim of learning from these direct experiences. (Bocci, 2008; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016).

The Reggio-approach beyond national borders and the importance of sustainability linked to local food.

In this section of the chapter, I report a concrete example of how this pedagogical philosophy born in Reggio-Emilia has been taken up and implemented beyond the Italian borders at the Aðalþing kindergarten in Iceland, which has both the Reggio-Emilia pedagogical approach and the Slow-Food philosophy as its points of reference. Dr. Guðrún Alda Harðardóttir, pedagogue and director of the kindergarten, created this kind of 'detachment' as a Slow-Food presidio in Iceland.

Aðalþing kindergarten and Reggio-approach (Aðalþing kindergarten and Reggio-approach: <https://www.adalthing.is/is/matarmenning>) opened in Reykjavík in 2009 with the presence of 120 children aged two to six. Aðalþing uses the pedagogical methodology of Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of Reggio-approach (Malaguzzi, 1995; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016). Thus, the role of all operators, including cooks, within the Aðalþing kindergarten is primarily to collaborate with the children. When it opened, the kindergarten decided to emphasize a well-defined type of food: the food must be healthy and nutritious, follow biodiversity standards, and be locally sourced. In this conception of place-based experiences related to local food, educators and teachers can develop greater awareness about sustainability education and nutrition education at the same time.

These principles are close to the pedagogical thinking of Malaguzzi, who used to propose direct experiences in places related to local crafts in the Reggio Emilia area, when Slow-Food presidia had not yet been labeled in this way because they were only born in 1998 (Petrini, 2016). However, these had already existed for centuries in the territory of Emilia, but until the need for them and the added value that these places and productions bring were perceived, these specific places were not particularly valued (Petrini, 2016). The concepts of sustainable activities and defense of biodiversity, and thus an education for sustainability related to food, would arise in the late 1990s. (Petrini, 2009, 2016; [Slow-Food Presidium of Reggio-Emilia:](#)

<https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/slow-food-presidi/reggiani-antichi-meloni-variety/>). Malaguzzi sensed the importance of proposing experiences on the territory to children, so that through direct experience they would also comprehend the value of local food.

This would only be 'labeled' in later years as "0 km food" or "0" food-miles, and seen with a new perspective since the 1990s as more sustainable food and in defense of biodiversity (Pretty, Jules & Ball, Andrew & Lang, Thomas & Morison, James., 2005; Stein, & Santini, F. 2022; Petrini, 2016). The reported example of the Icelandic school, which has both Reggio-approach principles and sustainability education linked to local food as its reference point, is not the first 'experiment' in chronological terms that places the previously mentioned principles at the center. An earlier experience, which occurred in an American school, placed at the center of their activities the purpose of offering direct experiences to their students aimed at the development of sustainability education, through food education based on local food.

In the mid-1990s, an extraordinary project was born in Berkeley, USA. It was the first school garden, an idea of Alice Waters, vice president of Slow Food International (Petrini, 2016). Alice Waters is a culinary activist and a leading spokesperson for the Slow Food movement in the United States. She founded the *Chez Panisse Foundation* with the goal of transforming American school gardens into vegetable gardens and educating children about real flavors so that they can have a nutritious, organic lunch every day and develop conviviality (Waters, 2008; Petrini, 2016).

The Slow-Food vice president's goal is to make nutrition education part of the public school system to reach every child from kindergarten to high school. Carlo Petrini and Slow-Food members, inspired by Alice Waters' initiative, started a similar project in Italy called 'Orto in Condotta' (Petrini, 2009). The Orto in Condotta project, born in Italy in 2004, has become one of the main tools of food and sustainability education activities in some schools (Petrini, 2016).

The project brought together students, teachers, parents, grandparents and local producers who, together, formed a community for the conveyance of knowledge about food culture and environmental protection to younger generations. Orto in condotta is a three-year project that is an educational tool for learning about the local area and its products, thus place-based. The project includes training courses for teachers, food and environmental education activities for students, and seminars for parents and grandparents who own small gardens (Petrini, 2009, 2016).

Schools that collaborate with Slow-Food pipelines often have a garden where students learn how to grow, train their senses, learn about biological rhythm, protect plant varieties, and disseminate traditional knowledge. Nowadays, the educational programs of 'Orto in Condotta' are spread all over the world, and students who participate in these initiatives are now capable of forming a global network and exchanging ideas and experiences even from a distance (Waters, 2008; Petrini, 2016).

Summary

In this chapter, it emerges that also thanks to progressive thinking and Dewey's writings, the school systems in some countries, particularly in the early 20th century but especially after the Second World War, underwent considerable changes (Dewey, 1900, 1916, 1938). The American philosopher was the inspirer of several new pedagogical practices that emerged not only in the United States; his thought underpins outdoor education as well as Reggio-approach (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958; Quay & Seaman, 2013; Malaguzzi, 1971, 1995; Fraser, 2012; Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016; Barbieri, 2017).

In Reggio-Emilia, after the Second World War, a unicum developed with regard to the pedagogical practices applied there if we take into consideration the Italian scholastic/pedagogical scenario, which was more characterised by the presence of the ideas and concepts developed by Montessori (Montessori, 1949, 1950). The experiential activities conducted in the Reggio Emilia area saw the places from which to draw inspiration for the activities to be proposed to the pupils. This also occurred for economic reasons because the impoverishment of Reggio Emilia families in the immediate post-war years did not allow for wide travel from Reggio-Emilia (Canovi, 1990; Ronchetti, 2009).

In addition, also because the proximity of the Apennines and the morphological variety of the Reggio Emilia territory could provide the cue, during the spring/summer period, for a series of outdoor experiential activities, each one different from the other. The Reggio-approach has also become a point of reference beyond the borders of Italy. In this chapter I have taken as an example a school established in Iceland. The Aðalþing school opened in Reykjavík in 2009, is clearly inspired by both the Reggio-approach and the philosophy of Slow-Food presidia born in Italy in 1998 (Petrini, 2009, 2016). In conclusion to this chapter, in practical terms, it can be stated that the founder of the Reggio-approach saw the potential in his region of Emilia to develop an abundance of experiential activities that placed the pupil at the centre of pedagogical practices.

Chapter 7: The adventurers and places of this research project

Introduction

In this chapter, I report some biographical notes concerning the two adventurers who participated in this research project and the characteristics and peculiarities of the locations that were chosen to stage place-based experiential activities. The information and data concerning the adventurers came through two separate interviews and through the dialogues we maintained throughout the research project.

The same mode of information gathering occurred with the sustainability and biodiversity experts, with two separate interviews between myself and Nikki from Mutonia and some of the salt workers from the Camillone salt pan (Turroni et al., 2022). The people interviewed described the history of those places, but in particular how they work there and the links with sustainability and biodiversity. In the first section, I introduce the figure of adventurer Davide Ugolini and his adventurous experiences that took place in different locations around the globe and his impressions of his interaction between himself and the students and his direct experience in an outdoor environment with the focus group.

In the second section, I introduce the figure of the adventurer Andrea Di Giorgio (Pelò) and his adventurous experiences that took place in different places around the planet and his feelings about his interaction between himself and the students in the search for places to implement the micro-adventures of the second outdoor phase.

In the third section, I report on the characteristics of the first place that hosted the first outdoor experience of the focus group: Mutonia near Santarcangelo di Romagna, located on a bank of the Marecchia river 5 km from the centre of Rimini. I report how the waste materials present in Mutonia were used in this experience, a

topic that will be explored in more detail in chapter 11: human activities are sustainable in this place. In the fourth section, I report on the characteristics of the second location of the second outdoor experience: the Marecchia Oasis Park, located on a bank of the Marecchia River about 4 km from Rimini. Adventurer Davide Ugolini was also present in this shared experience.

I investigate and describe the reasons that led the province of Rimini and the Emilia-Romagna region to establish this specific park. As mentioned earlier, in this section I focus on the motivations: these can be traced back to the desire to defend the biodiversity of certain native bird species. I will partially report on the special laws for the protection of local biodiversity that were established for the Marecchia Oasis Park. In the conclusion of this chapter, in the last section, I focus my work on the last place that saw the focus group's implementation of a place-based experiential experience activity: the Slow-Food Presidio of the Cervia saltpan called 'Camillone'. I report in this section the stories that link the salt workers to this place through interviews; in these transcribed dialogues, there are both the reasons that link the salt workers to the Camillone salt mine, and a local tradition such as the marriage with the sea that takes place every first Sunday of September to celebrate the centuries-old salt trade between Cervia and Venice.

Davide Ugolini

Davide Ugolini was born in Rimini on 01/02/1974 and currently lives in Misano Adriatico. Davide affirms that ever since he was a child, he has always felt attracted to open spaces, but only if characterised by the presence of nature.

The places of his childhood and his memories of his experiences as a child are all connected to the area of the province of Rimini. In particular, Davide states during the interview, Monte Carpegna was the destination of many of his youthful outdoor experiences because just 35 km from home, it was possible to go from a landscape context strongly connected to the Adriatic Sea with its typical long sandy beaches, to another completely different one: the mountains. Davide remembers how, in winter, his parents or family friends would take him to the Monte Carpegna area since it was easy for it to be full of snow: 'winter sports' on the doorstep of home had become a habit. The adventurer maintained these habits over time, at least until the climate changed after the 2000s as there was less snow on the Carpegna.

Davide says that he used to take his first bicycle and ride on the gentle hills that characterise the area between the coast and the first hills just 5/6 km from the sea, heading towards Coriano, San Clemente and Morciano where there were no cars. Davide, during the interview, states that outdoor sports characterised his childhood, with the characteristic of always being in a hurry, always in such a hurry that he was often told by his father: *'But do you always have to be in the fast lane?'* (Interview, Ugolini D., 2022). Football was his first sporting love, but at the age of 30, a friend of his told him about triathlon. His fascination with this sport quickly grew, because as they said then and now 'if you can be bad at one sport, why not be bad at three different ones?' (Interview, Ugolini D., 2022).

About triathlon it is common to begin with the shorter races, such as the sprint or the Olympic, says the athlete. Then there is the ironman as track, but no one starts without experience with an ironman. Then there is the ironman held on the island of Elba in Italy, Davide recalls. On this island, the race becomes an adventure (due to

the fact that the race track is very hard) within a competition that involves the athlete for 3.8 km, 180 km on the bike and a final marathon to finish (Davide Ugolini adventures A - <https://www.elbaman.it/en/>).

Davide started the triathlon with this specific race; he remembers the excitement when he crossed the finish line and was already thinking about something more difficult, a real adventure and not a race with a course decided by others. Ugolini recalls during the interview that he and his friend Stefano Gregoretti decided to participate in the Yukon Arctic Ultra. This is still a race, but the route was not predetermined by the organisation. They won it, arriving at the finish line together, choosing the best route over the other participants (Davide Ugolini adventures A – YukonArctic.https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.412224102197337&type=3&comment_id=412761982143549). Having finished one adventure, claims Davide, it was already time to think about the next one, but a little more adventurous. Again with his friend Stefano, they took part in the Gobi Marathon. At the end of the experience, Stefano was the winner and Davide fifth overall (Davide Ugolini adventures B - Marathon Gobi, <https://www.altarimini.it/News57287-riccionesi-gregoretti-e-ugolini-alla-maratona-del-gobi-250-km-desertici.php>).

The adventure was in the very nature of that experience because the weather was particularly changeable, the tracks customised and so we often got lost in the desert, Davide says. There were about a hundred participants and we helped each other, not out of sporting spirit, but out of necessity, Davide recalls. Unexpected events were often just around the corner and it was necessary to invent solutions on one's own, because as Davide says, *'if you fell into trouble in those places, no one would come to save you! You have to come up with a creative solution if you want to go home!* (Interview, Ugolini D., 2022).

The adventurer recounts that these adventurous experiences had gratified him so much but at the same time it was *'never enough'*. A local Romagna saying states that no matter what you did, 'you could do more' (Maiolani, 2012). Davide recounts that he was looking for something different and perhaps doing something to make his

passion for adventure known could be the new challenge to achieve. During the interview, the adventurer says that fostering the possibility of creating the foundations for an outdoor experience for differently-abled young people in 2020 had become the adventure that was missing: with this spirit, *'Two l'è mej che one'* was born.

Playing with words derived from English, the Romagnolo dialect and an old commercial for an ice cream that can be summed up with the phrase 'being in two is better than being alone'. Thus was born, Davide recalls, the adventure that would take eight young people with disabilities to cross the Apennines from Rome to Rimini (Davide Ugolini adventures C - *'Two l'è mej che one'* <https://www.altarimini.it/News152273-two-le-mej-che-one-insieme-tutto-e-piu-facile-in-onda-su-sky-sport-e-cielo-il-tour-in-tandem-da-roma-a-rimini.php>). The adventure began in Rome and all the participants, states Davide, had to work together so that we could return home, passing through naturalistic places, characterised by local history, traditions linked to the territory and local food: unique peculiarities through which to make an experience that was meant to be special for the participants. At the end of each day, says Davide, they would build a new camp where they could sleep in tents and spend convivial moments after having cycled for a good part of the day (Davide Ugolini adventures D - *'Two l'è mej che one'* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QJ3jvoz4pk>). The end of the adventure, as Ugolini pointed out, ended in Misano Adriatico, inside the Misano Santa Monica speed track. An end to the adventure desired by the participants to re-connect with the territory that has seen since the 1960s, Romagna as a land that feels a strong passion for what has become a distinctive local cultural factor: the passion for motors, as documented in the video of the end of the adventure *'Two l'è mej che one'* (Davide Ugolini adventures F - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TzBX5NVKiU>).

Davide Ugolini took part in this research project in outdoor adventure education, affirming at the end of his experiences with the focus group, that he never thought he would have the opportunity to share at school with some students his greatest passion, which has driven him to do unimaginable things, which he would not have thought were possible when he was 13 years old: the pleasure of going on

adventures and drawing from this some reflections and emotions. The students showed him enormous affection also thanks to his ability to easily empathise with the group, also through the reciprocal interviews that Davide conducted with the students to identify, during the indoor phase, the locations of the micro-adventures that would later take place in the second outdoor phase.



*Davide during the shared adventure
Marathon Gobi*



*Davide and phd fellow Werther before the
shared experience during the indoor phase at
school*

Andrea Di Giorgio (Pelò)

Andrea Di Giorgio was born in Cervia on 12/06/ 1967 and from a very young age showed an innate predisposition for sport, for messing around and making people laugh, says Andrea during the interview (Interview, Di Giorgio A., 2022).

The dialogue with Andrea, reported in this section of this chapter, concerning both his participation in this research project as well as his personal biography, takes into account his humour and gentle sarcasm that sometimes mixes with reality and sometimes does not, but above all with his desire to play with life: after all, Pelò states, 'I am like that'. In sport, Andrea remembers, he became a runner at the age of 6, preferring to run in the pine forest by the sea in Milano Marittima and blend into that specific environment until he was about 14. Andrea also says he had a youthful break he describes as 'shameful' of 6-7 years of mountain biking. Ever since I was a child, I have always been enraptured, fascinated by those who undertook sporting feats, and from a very young age, a talent for physical endurance was evident in me, accompanied, however, by the 'weakness' of not resisting the dreams/desires I brooded within' (Interview, Di Giorgio A., 2022).

In addition, Andrea states that 'creativity, curiosity and being in love with the unknown were the recipes to go and discover what is there, where thought can only make assumptions. '1+1 can also make 3 if you strongly desire it,' Pelò points out, 'and this can really take you where you want to go, discovering new opportunities to experience yourself through unthinkable challenges. 'Going beyond my boundaries was and is my goal,' says Andrea.

'To understand how the body and the mind move, how they connect and to what extent one can affect the other, only an adventure or a challenge would have given me the opportunity to understand where the 'beyond' ends, where the boundary is that I would then move further one more time' (Interview, Di Giorgio A., 2022). 'Anything that gives us an emotion,' Andrea recalls, 'even a small and trivial gesture, for example signing up for a race, confirming a personal event to myself, these small gestures allow

me to put myself back in the game. Every moment that passes in between, during an experience, is in itself a fantastic emotion, not to mention living it to the full, listening to the body, the mind and everything that goes on inside each moment of life. Feeling good and feeling alive I think is a good summary of all this', says Andrea' (Interview, Di Giorgio A., 2022).

Since 1995 onwards, Pelò fell into the triathlon trap and after 2007 he has only completed ultramarathons and ultratriathlons. 'I entered the ultra-distance world at the age of 40, when I had already done so many Ironmans and felt the need to push the boundaries, or rather to break them down and go further, wherever I could' (Interview, Di Giorgio A., 2022). After the 2010s, the ultrarunner thought of challenges that could generate positive messages in favour of the environment through his adventures: this is how '*Esco a fare 4 passi*' (Di Giorgio, 2015) was born. The athlete's intention was to run alone, with a cart, across the Alps to connect the two ends of the Alps, from the Tarvisio area to Courmayeur to make '*4 passi*' corresponding to 1200 km.

The message that Andrea would like to get across is that of uniting, bringing together places that geographically seem far away but that an adventure, on the other hand, can show to be closer than you think, affirms Andrea. Moreover, adds the adventurer, 'the signs of degradation and climate change affecting our Alps were already evident and I tried to raise awareness of this issue through this adventure: if one person with a cart crosses the entire Alpine arc, everyone could use a car less, no?' (Interview, Di Giorgio A., 2022). Andrea completed the challenge in February 2014 (Andrea Di Giorgio Adventures A - <https://www.libridimontagna.net/Esco-a-fare-4-passi>).

At the end of the adventure, Andrea was interviewed in Courmayer by the local public TV station Rai, and was called Pelò in the report. However, Andrea's nickname was Pelo ('hairy' in Italian) and not Pelò. The local TV being French-speaking, got the accent wrong. From that day on, Andrea recalls, he accepted the new nickname 'Pelò'. In 2019, 'Pelò' thought of an adventure highlighting the problem of poaching, as he was an ambassador for *Amref*. Thus was born the idea of running an ultramarathon

in Namibia both to make the Italian public still aware of the existence of poaching and to bring financial aid for the rangers who defend the animals in Namibia's National Park: the Run for Rhino (Di Giorgio, 2021) was born. The adventure will end in late January 2020. (Andrea Di Giorgio Adventures B - <https://www.romagnanotizie.net/cervia/2019/09/03/run-for-rhino-la-corsa-solidale-in-namibia-del-cervese-andrea-pelo-di-giorgio-per-dire-no-albracconaggio/>) just before the outbreak of the Covid pandemic (Di Giorgio, 2021).

The ultrarunner, having finished one adventure, imagines the next, he recalls during the interview. In 2020, he starts thinking about a new challenge that connects certain topics such as sustainability and pollution awareness in the Adriatic Sea. Across Me was born for these reasons. The athlete from Cervia crosses the Adriatic Sea, from Pula in Croatia to Cervia in Romagna, to highlight the problems afflicting our sea by bringing to light what many people are unaware of: the state of pollution of the Adriatic Sea. The introduction of the feat, in the video below, conducted by cycling coach Davide Cassani, underlines the points of Andrea's challenge, which are a desire to go to the places of nature to remind us that we are part of it and that we need to re-establish contact and balance with nature (Andrea Di Giorgio Adventures C - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7ydTyCXVkl>).

Andrea completes another similar adventure in 2022, with the aim of connecting the local history of Cervia characterised by the salt road with its territory, i.e. the trade of this local product which took place for centuries between Venezia and Cervia (Andrea Di Giorgio Adventures D - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjC6A8TvDW0>).

Andrea's aim with these adventures, the ultrarunner states during the interview, is to highlight the importance of caring for the area where one lives through the memory of local trade, particularly in salt, which was by its very nature local to Cervia and therefore only a few kilometres away from where for centuries local communities lived and sustained themselves with local products, in a sustainable manner. Andrea Di Giorgio took part in this research project in outdoor adventure education. Andrea said, at the end of the collaboration, that the greatest satisfaction he felt was sharing

his adventures with the students of the focus group, imagining that some, one day, will remember these shared experiences and begin his own, of adventures.



Andrea during the Run for Rhino adventure in defence of Namibian park animals



Andrea and phd fellow Werther before the shared experience during the indoor phase at school

Mutonia - Mutoid Waste Company

In this section of Chapter 7, I explore the genesis that gave birth to Mutonia. The original nucleus of Mutoid was formed in London in the mid-1980s, later branching out to different parts of Europe.

In Romagna, Mutoid arrived in 1990 to participate in the International Festival of Theatre in the Square. After a permanence that was supposed to be just a few days, the Mutoids settled on the left bank of the Marecchia river, 2 km from Santarcangelo (Nanni et al., 2019). I report through an interview given by the founders, *Joe Rush* and *Robin Cooke* and '*Strapper*', the feelings felt by the original nucleus that would make Mutonia the place where the waste materials from the scrap metal and demolition of Gambettola became the material used for the artworks created by the artists who live there.

Moreover, this place where human activities are sustainable hosted the first experiential activity based on the focus group place. The waste materials are the same as those used for the first shared focus group experience during the art workshop. The interview with some mutoids, in this section, reports the first impact the mutoids had with the inhabitants of Santarcangelo: 'They told us we had to camp near the Marecchia river. We objected: it was too dangerous. For three days we stayed in a car park near the historic centre, waiting for a solution. Then we had an idea. There was this former quarry, not far from the river.

It was perfect. We didn't move from there... For the village, we were like Martians, but we were well received from the start. Sure, we were strange, we had our own rules of life. But the locals liked us. Also because we realised that we should not take ourselves too seriously... How can you do that if you drive around with a maxi skull on your truck? We showed that our lifestyle can be for everyone, that you can do without consumerism by recycling and giving new life to waste and discarded materials. If we stopped in Santarcangelo, it was also because of its proximity to Gambettola, which was famous for the presence of so many scrapyards. But our

philosophy has remained unchanged, and there are an increasing number of Mutoids around the world.

The camp, meanwhile, has improved: today, thanks to us, there is much more greenery, we have many more showers and all the necessary facilities. In the early years we used to go swimming and cool off in the lake nearby. We did not become bourgeois, the secret was to continue to be ourselves and be accepted for who we are: Mutants, but true to our values' (Mutonia waste company founder interview - <https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/rimini/cronaca/mutoid-1.5337565>). Several artists who now work at Mutonia state that the philosophy that has accompanied them from the very beginning was to focus on creativity that starts from putting what has come out of the production cycle back into the centre of the artistic discourse.

'This poetics, however, is becoming difficult to sustain over time, having to contend with the increasingly restrictive laws that govern everything, even the life of objects that are no longer useful', stated Nikki during the interview (Interview to Nikki, Mutonia 2022). In addition to this, I explored during my visits and dialogues with the mutoids, how this artistic community has combined elements typical of a life in contrast to the times we live in: the simplicity of existences, a visceral relationship with the habitat that hosts them, the 'field' ('the yard'), a move away from the economic assumptions and frenzy of today's everyday lives. The presidio known as Mutonia Waste Company, as pointed out by Nanni et al., (2019), had to pass through local and regional laws regarding its functions, purposes and human activities conducted by the mutoid community. I delve deeper how at the end of a long bureaucratic path, Mutonia has found its location within the local social, working and landscape context.

The municipal administration welcomed the artists and assigned the area to them (in the absence of specific regulations until 2003 and then by means of a loan agreement), thus allowing the Mutoids to stay for over twenty years in the original camp. The problems concerning their stabilisation, stemmed from the fact that their activities were unique in that there was no local legislation regulating their work activities. The specificity of their artistic work, the fact that the basic material used

for the creation of their sculptures came from the Gambettola machine crushers, posed a 'problem' for the local administration as to how to frame their working and artistic activities within the legislative system of the municipality of Santarcangelo. Moreover, this limbo condition of the mutoid camp drew the attention of the owner adjacent to the Muroid camp, who requested to verify whether the artefacts there were compatible with urban planning and environmental regulations.

This was also because the Mutoid camp was under landscape restrictions (Nanni, Vitale, Cerquetti, 2019, p. 1046). In order to deal quickly with the issues that had previously arisen, a thematic POC (Art. 30 20/200) was approved by commission resolution No. 94 of 2014 with an immediate implementation function that allowed Mutonia to be stabilised: initially as an *Art Park of Mutonia*.

I deepen the fact that while the camp had found a legal basis for its existence, the activities that the local community conducted there required further regulation. The activities of the Mutoids, the inhabitants pointed out, did not have a negative impact on the local environment also because the materials used for their work already existed, they were present in the Gambettola waste disposal facilities. The mere fact, analysed in this section, that the material used for the sculptures was waste from other industrial production activities that had already been discarded and was simply transformed, placed the Mutoids in the condition of operating in a sustainable way because they were reusing what had already been discarded from the local industrial production chain and elsewhere.

In addition, after a long process, the municipality acknowledged Mutonia to be compatible with the landscape restrictions of that area due to a broad interpretation of the regulation considering that 'the landscape is by its nature changeable and not fixed and static to criteria used in the past' (Nanni et al., p. 1049). Furthermore, the activities

conducted in Mutonia were recognised as sustainable and environmentally friendly (Nanni et al., 2019)



-F1-Nikki in Mutonia during the shared experience, before the interview with the artist



-F2-The focus group, Nikki and phd fellow Werther during the shared experience

The Marecchia River Oasis Park

In this section of the chapter, I investigate the reasons that led the Province of Rimini and therefore the Emilia-Romagna region to establish the Marecchia Oasis Park. The main purposes that led to the creation of this protected area, which I analyse in this chapter, are mainly attributable to the willingness to preserve and safeguard the various species of animals and native vegetation typical of the Marecchia Valley, so that there is a protection of the biodiversity of the species that will be mentioned in this section of the chapter, which have been present in these geographical areas for centuries (Valbonesi et al., 2011).

The establishment of the Marecchia Park Oasis is motivated by the protection of the resident fauna present such as Anatidae, Ardeidae, Charadriiformes and Scolopacidae and others, which have been present along the stretch of the Marecchia River as documented in written texts dating back to the 16th century (Gellini & Cecarelli, 2000). Considering that the Marecchia River represents the most important and most recognised identity element of the entire Marecchia Valley, the river and its environment are of primary importance in this context. The Oasis was established in 1992 (Del. Comitato Circondariale n. 89 of 05/10/1992) and then renewed several times over the years (Gellini & Cecarelli, 2000; Valbonesi et al., 2011).

The boundaries have always been confirmed (although there was a very small change in 1998). The most recent update was made with the adoption of the Provincial Hunting Plan 2014 - 2018 (Valbonesi et al., 2011). I have elaborated in this section of the chapter that with the entry into force of the new regional wildlife plan mentioned above, it was deemed appropriate to propose the establishment of the Oasis in order to give continuity to the protection of the biodiversity present.

The Oasi is located in the terminal part of the watercourse near the coast and was established because of its importance for the numerous bird species of the aquatic environments for nesting and resting during migration, but above all in a logic of preservation of local biodiversity (Tinarelli, 2005; Valbonesi et al., 2011). In the

documentation analysed, it emerges that the vegetation present is mainly poplar and willow forests. The Oasis Park territory is largely occupied by an artificial wetland created by damming the Marecchia River for water supply purposes.

The periodic draining of the basin (from November to April) leads to the disappearance of the most valuable habitat and has repercussions on migratory stopovers, although it does not inhibit nesting. Whilst there are no plans to release new fauna species, captures of pheasant and hare in particular could be envisaged if necessary, if these species exceed the target densities identified in the fauna plan or cause high damage to the sensitive crops present (vineyards in particular).

Any specimens captured are destined for other protection areas in the Marecchia Valley (Palazzini & Biondi, 2011). The provincial and regional imbalances analysed above testify to the local authorities' desire to preserve the fauna and flora species known to exist in order to maintain certain naturalistic habitats that have characterised the Marecchia Valley over time, preserving its biodiversity.

The Cervia salt pans and the 'Camillone' Slow-Food Presidio

In this section of the current chapter, I analyse the fact that the Cervia salt pan nature reserve is a protected natural area located in the municipality of Cervia, in the province of Ravenna. It was established as a Nature Reserve by a ministerial decree in 1979; Cervia's historical importance is linked to its 'white gold' and is documented by various testimonies over the centuries (Turroni et al., 1997; Carvelli, 2022).

The first documentation of the salt works dates back to the 10th century AD, but some recent archaeological discoveries suggest its presence as early as Roman times (Russo & Goffredo, 2018). Cervia is so closely linked to its salt pans that some scholars believe that its name is related to salt; the place name Cervia may derive from the Latin word *acervus* (cumulus/amount), a word referring to the heaps of salt that local communities have produced since ancient times (Carvelli, 2022). In this section, I focus on the fact that Cervia is the last salt pan to produce salt in the same way as it did in Roman times. Also for this reason, the 'Camillone' saltpan has become a Slow-Food presidio since 2004 (<https://ecomuseocervia.it/en/the-antennas/salina-camillone.html>). According to Turroni (1997), I outline that the Camillone saltpan is currently the only survivor of the 149 multi-harvested salt pans that existed until 1959. As stated earlier, the Camillone saltpan is still in operation today thanks to the activity carried out by the *Gruppo Culturale Civiltà Salinara*, whose volunteers collect salt according to the ancient artisanal method and with the tools of yesteryear (Turroni et al., 1997; Carvelli, 2022).

I have investigated that until the mid-20th century, the Camillone saltpan was indicated with the number 89 and was considered a medium-small saltpan, built on unstable terrain due to the large amount of sand mixed with clay; moreover, it was considered unprofitable because it was subject to veins of fresh spring water present there. Until 1959, the Cervia saltpan, unlike the other Italian salt pans, were worked using a very ancient system dating back to the Middle Ages or up to Roman times, also known as the 'cervese' system because it was based on harvesting salt over 5 days.

This method was only adopted at the Camillone saltpan and not by the other Italian saltpans. (Turrone et al., 1997; Carvelli, 2022). During the salt season, each fund was assigned to a salt farmer, who worked it with the help of all the members of his family, especially during the salt harvest period, from May to September.

It emerges from the sources I have consulted and which I summarise in this section that just as if it had been a small farm, the saltpans needed the work of the salt workers and also the unskilled labour of the saliners' wives and children during the summer period (Turrone et al., 1997). The work of the salt workers in Cervia was considered a true art as far as the harvesting of salt was concerned. During the interview with Oscar Turrone, he states that these skills were learned day by day slowly, with the aim of learning all the secrets of the tides of the Adriatic Sea, how to use the '*pavoncello*' (shovel in English) so as not to ruin the bottom of the salt pan, learning through experience the importance of the influence of the winds to avoid damage to the salt production.

To witness and keep alive the memory of the production activities of the local communities that characterised the Cervia salt pans, the *Museo Del Sale* (<https://musa.comunecervia.it/en/home.html>) was established. I noticed that this is located inside the Magazzino del Sale (Salt Warehouse) on the canal port of Cervia. I explored in this section of chapter 9 that the function of remembering lived experiences always plays a crucial role in the salt workers' work as stated by Turrone et al., (1997). The MUSA preserves a portion of Cervia's history, which keeps the memory of work in the salt works alive thanks to the collection of documents, tools and photos that bear witness to the environment and salt production.

I have analysed the fact that the Salt Museum was born out of the passion and desire of the local community not to lose a cultural heritage that is very important for and belongs to the town (Turrone et al., 1997). In this section, I focus on the fact that in the second half of the 1980s, ex salt-miner Agostino Finchi worked together with a group of enthusiasts, now united in the *Gruppo Culturale Civiltà Salinara* (Salt Civilisation Cultural Group), to recover material related to the history of the salt mine

and set up a permanent exhibition at the Magazzini del Sale (Turrone et al., 1997). Today the museum is part of the Province of Ravenna's Museum Network and has obtained the Emilia-Romagna Region's Quality Museum qualification and is the driving force behind the Cervia Salt and Sea Ecomuseum, a diffuse museum being developed to further enhance the city's culture and tradition.

In this section of the chapter on Cervia's saltpans, and specifically on the Camillone saltpan, I report an interview I had the opportunity to conduct with the president of the *Gruppo Culturale Civiltà Salinara* (Salt Civilisation Cultural Group), Oscar Turrone (2022). Turrone states that 'Until 1959, salt was harvested in Cervia in an artisanal way, basically by hand, thanks to the skill and experience of the salt workers, handed down through generations, often within the family. At that time, about 150 salt beds were active, ranging from 25,000 to 30,000 square metres each, between the evaporating section and the salting area. Altogether, the total area of the Cervia salt pans is over 820 hectares'. And then I ask, 'What has happened since the 1960s?' (interview to Oscar Turrone, 2022). 'With the advent of the cold chain and refrigerators, salt lost one of its main functions.

The market price dropped considerably and the Italian State implemented a restructuring of the production system, moving from the local, compartmentalised and periodic system to the so-called French-style system, which involves large tanks with a single harvest at the end of the summer - as was already the case in our country in Cagliari and Margherita di Savoia, for example - but above all the use of mechanical means'. What were the consequences? 'There was a change in the structure of the salt ponds, in harvesting and working methods, and in the industrial approach. But fortunately, an original saltpan, the so-called Camillone, was preserved.

At the end of the 1980s, thanks to a group of retired salt workers and volunteers, after more than 25 years of inactivity, the basins were put back into production. Since 1990, the Camillone saltpan have been producing salt every year until today, using traditional Cervia artisanal methods that are unique in Italy'. And what role have the rest of the salt pans played in recent years besides being protected as a nature reserve

and tourist attraction of the Po Delta Park? 'After various pressures, Turrone says, and after political, social, legal initiatives, in the early 2000s the state granted a public-private company, the Parco della Salina di Cervia - which is owned by the municipality - even a limited exploitation of salt production, which is carried out in a standardised manner using the industrial method established in the 1960s.

A part, more or less 20% of the annual production, is packaged under a now recognised brand name, with good promotion initiatives - for example, the symbolic annual donation to the Pope - and marketing, launched on the market as quality salt with a typically sweet characteristic. How Cervia salt is a sweet salt, I ask? 'The sweetness attributed to Cervia salt derives from the fact that it is pure sodium chloride and has a pleasant, delicate taste, free of those bitter notes deriving from the presence of chalk, potassium or other mineral elements that alter its slight flavour. The visual effect is also that of a certain transparency of the crystals compared to the milky, shiny whiteness of salts from other sources. From the point of view of sweetness, we can say that by virtue of the periodic and punctual method of harvesting and preservation, Camillone salt is an excellence, a so-called speciality, even compared to the good quality of the current, overall, industrial production in Cervia.

Moreover, in its essence, the salt produced only in the Camillone salt works defends its biodiversity'. What is special about the Camillona production method, I ask to Oscar? 'The harvesting of the salt is multiple and takes place regularly, if it doesn't rain, every five days, in each of the basins, called cavedini in the Romagnolo dialect. In these basins, the deposition of salt crystals takes place throughout the season from June to September. For harvesting, we use not only traditional procedures and techniques, but the same tools as in the past. Due to the special quality of the salt obtained and the processing methods, the Camillona also became a Slow Food presidium in 2004.

Within the presidio, Mauro Zanarini is the guardian, I am responsible for the production specifications. That is why the Camillone is also a kind of open-air museum that complements the documentary museum set up in the Magazzini del Sale

in the city, and in the summer it also hosts visitors and tourists eager to see the salt mine up close, and perhaps even try their hand at salt harvesting for a day. As an association that takes care of it and promotes it, we have over 500 members and more than 40 volunteers working on salt harvesting shifts'.

What is your relationship with the Salina Park, I ask? *'We salt miners are an integral part of it, both as a natural area and as a production point, so we give a part of our artisanal harvest for marketing, alongside the other types marked as Cervese salt. Our production this year (2022) was 800 quintals, and we sold more than 400 quintals to the company for packaging labelled Riserva Camillone whole sweet salt. What is left over from the annual harvest is for our use and donation, mostly free offerings - either loose or in packages bearing our name - for a fund to support the cultural association and the Muse'. And where can you find your salt and who uses it, I ask?*

'As I said, the Salina Park Company's brand is present in local food shops and then in the festivals of the villages nearby and in the museum in Cervia Musa. On a commercial level, beyond domestic use, there is considerable interest from restaurateurs and artisans in the local food sector, because the taste of Cervia's sweet salt is simply unique'. (Interview with Turrone Oscar, President of the Gruppo Culturale Civiltà Salinara, 2022).



Turrone and I while teaching me the salt harvesting technique



The undersigned and other saltworkers during the exhibition in Torino of various slow-food presididi of the world

Summary

In this chapter, I have reported the biographies and some adventures of the adventurers who took part in this research project, as well as analysed the peculiarities of the places that hosted the three place-based experiential activities. The biographies of the adventurers provide insight into the motivations of the adventurers from their childhood to embark on the adventures they conducted in different places around the world and how these played a crucial role in this research project.

The adventures of the adventurers and the meanings and reflections that can be drawn from them were developed through specific direct interviews, otherwise other information came from informal moments I had with them and also thanks to some written books that narrate some of the adventures they accomplished (Di Giorgio, 2015, 2021, 2023). Through the collaborations that took place between myself and the adventurers, it was possible to lay the foundations for shared experiences conducted together with the focus group.

It clearly emerges the spirit, the passion that drove these adventurers to engage in adventures which then had the function of encouraging the emergence of stimuli and motivations in the focus group with the aim of inventing micro-adventures in places near their homes and schools: these themes will be explored in depth in chapters 10 and 11. In the last three sections of this chapter, I investigated the peculiarities of the places connected to the direct experiences carried out by the focus group: Mutonia, Parco Oasi Marecchia and Salina Camillone.

It emerges from the above-mentioned sources that all the previously mentioned places have one factor in common: human activities are either sustainable or both sustainable and in defence of biodiversity (Nanni et al., 2019, Gellini & Cecarelli, 2000; Tinarelli, 2005; Valbonesi et al., 2011, Turrone et al., 1997; Carvelli, 2022, Presidio Slow-Food Camillone <https://ecomuseocervia.it/en/the-antennas/salina-camillone.html>). The unique and specific peculiarities of these places are at the centre

of this research project, since thanks to these specificities it was possible to implement some experiential activities based on the specific features of the places.

In the 10th and 11th chapters of this research project, the outdoor places mentioned will be taken up again and I will elaborate on the findings deriving from the experiential activities in those places carried out, experiences which, thanks to the uniqueness of these places, were aimed at fostering transformative experiences towards a more sustainable and conscious action on biodiversity.

Chapter 8: Research process

Introduction

In this opening section of Chapter 8, I noted that in the scientific literature related to outdoor adventure education, the figure of the adventurer and his possible interactions with the student have not been extensively studied. In addition, I observed that at the same time in the scientific literature, the search for places where human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity, as reference places where place-based experiential activities can be implemented, is not widely explored. Given these concerns, following the aim to deepen or initiate some new topics in this field of study, the following research questions the focus of this research project:

-Can adventures, by narrating their own stories, motivate students to undertake micro-adventures in places where human activities are sustainable or in defense of biodiversity?

-Can the experiences undertaken by students in places where human activities are sustainable and or in defense of biodiversity, inspire them to repeat similar experiences in the future to develop more sustainable acting?

Interpretive research

The interpretive perspective is participant-centred, giving priority to the way people construct differing and competing meanings. In general, it seeks to comprehend the way people make sense of their worlds, and recognises that there are multiple conceptions of reality (Pope, 2006).

Taking into account that stories can never exactly replicate lived experience, they nevertheless provide a perspective on the meanings attributed to experience and the way people experience the world. In addition, interpretive researchers usually begin with the assumption that human persons are both unique and connected to the broader culture in which they live (Page, 2000). In doing so, interpretive researchers attempt to engage with what their participants experience and do, or at least with what is revealed in the communication about the experience, with the aim of understanding the meaning of a phenomenon, rather than predicting findings (Cranton, 2001). The particularities that emerge from the lived experiences become central to the research (Kedar, 2008); for this reason, interpretive approaches require methods that allow participants to reveal the meanings that become important to them because they are the first memories to emerge from reenactments of their experiences.

Therefore, the stories reported by the participants referable to an experience not only convey meanings, but their structure and style impose a kind of order on events that can influence the development or emergence of meanings. Although it is not possible to fully understand another person's experience, it is possible to gain some common understandings through attentive listening (Bruner, 2002). The meanings that emerge through stories occur when people organise their ideas and select what is important to them, then they desire to share with others what they think is meaningful (Chase, 2005).

A narrative approach

Specific meanings can often emerge through stories; stories offer people a way to organise experience and give meaning to their experiences. This happens when people order ideas, select what is important to them and share it with others. Thus, stories not

only convey meaning, but their structure and style impose a type of order on events that can influence emerging meaning. In addition, to constructing stories to make sense of one's experiences, shared narratives shape people and it is through the processes of listening and constructing narratives that a deeper understanding of the self or a particular phenomenon emerges. The methodology of narrative research, as noted by Bruner (2002) Andrews et al., (2008), emphasises subjectivity, meaning-making and intersubjectivity. These factors help us to understand and make sense of our lives and experiences.

Consequently, stories are not merely accounts of events, but take on the character of values and beliefs: narratives are a vehicle for the creation of cultural and individual meanings. In addition as Gough (2000) states, 'stories are created by someone, somewhere' and take on their own relevance (p.115). Thus, reaffirming that the narrative approach of interpretive research is based on people's stories, these help to make sense of their world, their identity and the things that happen to them. According to Chase (2005), he states that narrative is retrospective meaning making the shaping or ordering of past experience: narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions. In addition, Chase (2005) affirms that narrative researchers consider every story as credible because it is an expression of the person at a specific time and place. Some scholars (Cahnmann, 2003; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Sparkers, 2008) noted that an important element of narrative approaches is the way in which materials are re-presented. Drawings, written texts of different types, craft artefacts, stories, are all used to capture meanings. Whereas some people have difficulty explaining their experiences, feelings and thoughts, but most are able to recount an event through a drawing.

The narrative approach to interpretive research is a pragmatic way of trying to capture people's experiences in terms of meaning-making. This method, therefore, relies on involving research participants by asking them to describe their experiences in order to explore meaning, including through a questionnaire. This technique leaves the participant free to express what they felt during the direct experience, so that the researcher does not interfere and change the meanings that the participant actually felt

during the lived experience. This technique leaves considerable autonomy to the participant to express what they feel.

Research Process

Encouraging focus group students to take part in shared outdoor experiences with an adventurer and several sustainability and biodiversity experts was at the heart of this research project.

In order to provide an opportunity to explore the participants' responses, four indoor experiences were undertaken with the presence of two adventurers and three outdoor experiences in places where human activities are sustainable, or both sustainable and in defence of biodiversity. The following sections describe the selection of participants, ethical considerations, interviews, transcription, analysis and writing.

Participants

This study was based on a series of 7 shared experiences involving students, adventurers and experts in sustainability and or biodiversity. 21 students from a school in Rimini, all volunteers but belonging to a secondary school class, took part in the research project. The project and the possible shared experiences to be carried out (these would be outlined more precisely at a later stage, taking into account both the pandemic context and the participants' wishes) were presented initially to the class teachers, then to the class parents and finally to the participants themselves.

All these separate steps saw the approval of the various actors previously mentioned. The students ranged in age from 12 to 13 (even at the beginning of October, some were still 11 years old); having had the opportunity to speak directly

with them, I found a sincere interest in the place-based experiential activities I was proposing, especially the outdoor ones. The students had undergone all the restrictions of the first wave of Covid and had followed most of the lessons remotely the previous year.

Curiosity in being able to have direct experiences in places near the school, for the first time as a class in almost two years, was the main factor in engaging them. The chance to have direct contact with adventurers and interact with them also aroused considerable interest. All of this, initially, was characterised by a partial scepticism in the mere real possibility of implementing what was proposed as a consequence of the events we were experiencing. The scepticism disappeared when we started to realise the project with the first shared experience and the atmosphere became warm and involving, then from the second experience in particular with the first adventurer, the students expressed a deep involvement.

Ethical considerations

Throughout the research process, it was necessary to take ethical considerations into account in order to ensure that the results of the study did not have any negative repercussions on those involved. In conducting the research, I adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations of the school involved and the Italian law on activities concerning children under the age of 14.

In agreement with the parents, during the first shared experience, each student independently decided on a fantasy nickname. The families asked not to use real first names and surnames (a couple of exceptions are present). Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research at the initial approach. Considering that all participants were volunteers, although representing in concrete terms an entire class of a middle school, focus group members could refuse to participate in the study or

retire from it at any time. In addition, focus group members had the opportunity to edit or omit parts of their responses.

Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires was the basis for the collection of data from the responses related to the participants' experiences; in addition, data came both from the large number of photos that were collected during the experiences and from the field notes that I myself took. All completed experiences were shared experiences, in which I participated in the experiences with the role of facilitator and co-builder of new knowledge among peers.

The use of questionnaires was preferred rather than interviews for two reasons: the pandemic context suggested limiting proximity between people to minimise Covid contagion. In addition, some parents and students showed unease, when the project was presented, if interviews were used to collect data.

Use of the questionnaires

At the end of each shared experience, the students were given a folder with their nicknames on it. In the folder were some photocopies of the basic questionnaire, which was handed out at the end of each experience: the students decided for themselves how long they needed to answer the 3 questions, and they could if they wanted to skip some questions and use as many words as they wanted.

At the end of each new experience, they were asked if they wanted to change the answers given during the previous experiences, however, no one ever wanted to change or omit the answers already given. This way of proceeding was designed to generate sufficiently detailed accounts of a series of experiences completed both indoors and outdoors and to allow participants time to reflect on their responses on

the questionnaires (Emerson & Frosh, 2004). The use of the questionnaires allowed the participants to feel free to express themselves as they wished, bearing in mind that on each questionnaire the nick-name was written and never the real name and surname (only one teacher had an exact match of the participants' nick-names and surnames). There was no conflict between my interests as a researcher and the responses given by the students, due in part to the structure of the anonymous questionnaire itself.

Use of Photos

After discussions with the students' families, we decided to take photos during the experiences to document what was occurring. I was in charge of using a single telephone in off-line mode, with the aim of collecting as many photos as possible. This had a dual purpose: to document our shared experiences and extract data from them, and at the same time to have something to remember the moments we spent together as a means of fostering a common memory among all those who had taken part in the shared experiences.

Taking into account the wishes of the relatives and the Italian law on privacy, all those who were under 14 years of age at the time of the experiences are shown in this thesis with some cancellations. During the data sharing phase with my supervisors, I used the photos in full without omissions. Most of the time it was me who took the photos, apart from when I see myself in the photos. In some cases the students, adventurers and sustainability or biodiversity experts took some photos for us. Negative notes on the photos: the indoor experiences lack good light quality and therefore the photos themselves are partially faded.

The outdoor photos in some cases were 'blurred' or with opposing sunlight: in these cases, I deleted the photos when I realised they were not useful. The outdoor environment of the first experience facilitated the collection of photos, even for the static phase of the art workshop. The second outdoor experience saw us almost always

in motion, and this factor did not help the final quality of the photos. The outdoor environment of the last experience almost always showed the sun against not facilitating documentation through photos.

Analysis

The analysis consists of trying to make sense of what was seen, heard and read on the questionnaires during the seven shared experiences of this research project. Narrative analysis is context-sensitive, in that researchers collect descriptions of events and occurrences (in this case, particularly through questionnaires/photos) and synthesise or plot them into one or more stories (Polkinghorne, 1995a, 1995b). The advantage of narrative analysis is that it preserves the details of the individual story. However, the exact processes of interpreting qualitative materials can be difficult to convey, as some remain intuitive (Elliott, 2005).

Some scholars such as Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, (2003) assert that the narrative approach to interpretive research is a pragmatic way of trying to capture people's experiences in terms of meaning-making; in other words, involving participants who are part of the focus group, this approach requires them to describe their direct experiences that relate to this research project in order to then explore the meanings that emerge and analyse them.

Notes and transcription of questionnaires

The approach taken was to work inductively with the questionnaire material and photos as well as field notes to avoid predetermined categories. After each questionnaire, I wrote notes to capture my intuitive responses and initial impressions. This is in line with the participatory nature of narrative research that requires continuous and systematic reflexivity (Hiles & Cermak, 2008). In addition, Schram (2006) suggests that memos help to explore ideas generatively and achieve a more self-reflective understanding of analytical choices. Given the nature and structure of the responses on the questionnaire, the sentences present did not need any particular interpretation, apart from the difficulty in reading some calligraphy and 'translating' some forms of local sleng into standard Italian. In fact, Caulley (2008) argues that our vocabulary and conversational structure are different from formal written language, and therefore subject to less interpretation. This stage involved carefully reading and re-reading the written statements of the transcripts to identify anything that appeared significant and relevant to the research question (Smith & Eatough, 2006).

Writing as analysis

The process of interpreting the responses to the questionnaires continued. In doing so, I became interested in the ways in which different writing styles can help make sense of the data and convey it to the researcher (Richardson, 2001, 2002; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Eisner (1997) also observed that writing can stimulate the imagination, enhance empathic understanding and increase our awareness of what is unfolding around us. In addition, other scholars assert that 'communication is at the heart of all research, and that writing is a method of analysis and how we write is a theoretical and moral question' (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 9).

Summary

The narrative approach outlined earlier in this chapter allows some elements to be highlighted: it recognises the importance of language even if it is transcribed, it also emphasises the role of the researcher as co-author of the stories. Furthermore, it allows the focus to be placed on the meaning derived from the reported personal experiences and enables the representation of these ideas, feelings and emotions in an informative and compelling manner.

The interpretive perspective is participant-centred and seeks to understand how people make sense of their experiences. It also recognises that there are multiple conceptions of reality (Pope, 2006). The narrative approach associated with this research project allows for the capture of elements of participants' experiences that escape other forms of research (Kedar, 2008). The narrative approach, as outlined by Josselson, Lieblich and McAdams (2003) towards interpretive research, is a pragmatic way of trying to capture people's experiences and the meanings given to them

In this way, the collection, transcription, analysis and reporting of narrative research present dilemmas and concerns, but at the same time pose positive elements as they capture elements of the participants' experiences that escape other forms of research.

Chapter 9: Methodology

Introduction

In Chapter 9, I analyse the different types of data collection that are commonly used in research related only partially to the field of outdoor education, but more generally I explore the different techniques of data collection in both qualitative and quantitative research. Doing so the focus, in the first section of this chapter, is placed on analysing the advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of questionnaires. I analyse how they can be used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

I delve deeper this topic by partially introducing an initial comparison with the technique of collecting data through interviews. I highlight both the elements that the scientific literature considers to be positive arising from the use of this technique, and the negative aspects related to it noted by scholars. In this section, I explore the fact that interviews to collect data are more associated with qualitative final data, however much this depends on the aims a research is pursuing. In the third section, I explore mixed methods whose ultimate aim is to develop a method that relates quantitative data to qualitative data or vice versa. In this third section, I analyse the fact that a solid design based on both qualitative and quantitative data collection, a type of mixed methods, can give a more complete and satisfying final reading of the findings, rather than the use of only one technique (be it only quantitative or qualitative).

In the last section, I introduce the methodology that was used in this research project. I explore and elaborate in this final section of the chapter, how this research project was mainly based on the use of a questionnaire with open-ended questions with a design as close as possible to the structure of an open interview. In addition, I report on the use of mixed methods that was used in this research project, the ultimate aim of which was to relate the quantitative data collected with the qualitative data, so

that the final results would not omit certain phenomena from the research project that could have been missed by using only one data collection technique. In order to bring out the relationships between the quantitative and qualitative data discovered through the use of questionnaires, in this section I introduce the questionnaire used for this research project. The in-depth examination of quantitative data in relation to qualitative data will follow in the following chapters.

In addition, I present an example of a questionnaire filled in by a participant (#Albero_09). This permits the introduction of the narrative interpretation that will follow in Chapter 10 and 11 of this research project. In this section, I also report in the final part of this chapter, some graphs related to the direct experiences carried out which represent quantitative data by means of graphs based on slider scales. These graphs and charts will be analysed in order to infer the emergence of a trend related to the place-based experiential activities occurred. Using the slider scales for all seven accomplished activities, the emerging quantitative data can be considered as continuous data

A questionnaire-based data collection technique

In this section of the chapter, I analyse the peculiarities of questionnaires. In general terms, questionnaires are designed to collect data from a group of people within the scope of a specific study (Zammuner, 1996, 1998). Questionnaires with qualitative data collection purposes, for example, are used when it is necessary to collect exploratory information to help prove or disprove a hypothesis. In fact, Emiliani and Zani (1998) define a questionnaire as a data collection protocol that involves the written drafting of closed and/or open-ended questions followed by a coding grid on which to record the response. Therefore, Emiliani and Zani et al., (1998), state questionnaires are often used to validate or test a previously formulated hypothesis. Nevertheless, most questionnaires follow certain essential patterns, dependent on the

nature of the research conducted. The questionnaire may have an exploratory structure, which is the case when collecting qualitative data in a new research field, not previously investigated in other research projects. This type of questionnaires use open-ended questions, as they allow more information to be gathered and enable participants to feel freer, having few or no restrictions, in expressing their opinions on their experience (Manganelli Rattazzi, 1990; Zammuner, 1998).

In addition, a properly constructed questionnaire must have the characteristics of simplicity and be intuitive, in order to put the participant in the best possible position during the question-answering phase (Zammuner, 1996, 1998). In brief, the sentence construct must be easy for the participant to understand. When questions are unclear or difficult to interpret, respondents using a questionnaire may choose or invent any answer and distort the final data collected unintentionally as a result of an unclear construct (Pallotti, 2000; Palloti, 2021 - lectures for the 36th doctoral cycle Reggio childhood-studies). According to Zammuner (1996), she states that questionnaires are information-gathering means, defined as a structured set of questions and their response categories defined a priori by the constructor, i.e. of so-called closed questions where the respondent (understood as the one who answers the written questions of the questionnaire) is asked to identify among the answers presented the one that comes closest to his/her own position, and/or of open questions, i.e. which do not envisage predetermined answers.

As noted by Zammuner (1996), the respondent who has to fill out the questionnaire can answer by reporting and evaluating his or her own experience. As outlined by Zammuner (1998), questionnaires have advantages and at the same time some disadvantages. As noted by some scholars such as Manganelli Rattazzi (1990), Guidicini (1995) and Zammuner (1998), the advantages are that the questions on questionnaires are quick to administer and the answers are simple to transcribe. In addition, the standardised questionnaire can be administered to a considerable number of people at the same time, saving time and resources compared to the open interview format (Zammuner, 1998; Campanini, 2000; Corrao, 2005). Doing so, the information collected can be processed and presented quickly through the use of readily available

computer software, such as Excel, and others if required by the research. I explore, however, the limitations of questionnaires as a consequence of their structure. Emiliani and Zani (1998), state that the questionnaire can be seen as an inflexible instrument. This factor could make the answers less spontaneous and rich in content, risking to be little adherent to the respondents' most authentic thought in its complexity and articulation.

Therefore, as a possible disadvantage, the questionnaire may be perceived as a rigid tool; the respondent may be induced to give an answer that does not correspond to his or her thoughts if the questionnaire is closed-ended. In addition, the respondent may not understand the question, and the consequence may be an answer that is called lost or distorted Zammuner (1996, 1998). Furthermore, the questionnaire cannot detect the difficulties of certain group of people, i.e. those who are poorly educated or have difficulty understanding certain words if they are considered 'technical'. Moreover, by using questionnaires, there is no interaction/help between the one who administers the questionnaires and the one who has to answer them; however, in this disadvantage, there is the advantage that 'manipulation' of the answer by the researcher/administrator is not possible (Guidicini,1995; Corrao, 2005).

An interview-based data collection technique

In this section of Chapter 7, I analyse the interview as a data collection technique. I explore how the scientific literature over time has identified what can be considered the weaknesses and strengths inherent in the interview-based data collection method. Furthermore, I investigate some of the many purposes of qualitative data collection. The scientific literature in this field is rich in definitions and examples. As noted by Bailey (1994), the circular process of the empirical work of qualitative data collection is divided into five phases. First stage, choice of problem and definition of hypotheses. This is followed by the formulation of the research design (choice of sample, methods,

instruments). Third phase, data collection, followed by data coding and analysis and finally the interpretation of the qualitative results. According to Bailey (1994), each of the five phases depends on the previous one; an error in an earlier phase could also compromise subsequent phases. Moreover, each stage Bailey (1994) asserts, can be a basis for further researches.

For example, the objective of qualitative research through interviews is conceived as the development of concepts that help us to understand phenomena in natural contexts, by assigning the right emphasis to meanings and experiences, through the points of view of people who have lived a certain experience (Trentini, 1989; Ricolfi, 1997; Campanini, 2000). Corbetta (1999) defines the qualitative interview as a conversation elicited by the interviewer, addressed to subjects chosen on the basis of a survey plan and in substantial numbers, having cognitive purposes, guided by the interviewer, on the basis of a flexible and non-standardised questioning scheme. Whilst, Kvale (1996) describes the qualitative interview as a form of professional conversation that follows rules and employs specific techniques, in an exchange of opinions based on sincerity between two people who confront each other on a topic of common interest, producing knowledge.

In this section of the chapter, I will not delve into the difference that some scholars have debated between interview and colloquy, limiting myself to quoting the following statement by Trentini (2000) that claims 'in the reality of (social) work, indeed in its various articulations, a rigid distinction between interview - an intended communication relationship - and colloquy - a suffered communication relationship - is currently unrealistic' (p. 26). Having made these assumptions, I explore in this part of the chapter the fact that the interview technique can lead to both advantages and disadvantages. Among the disadvantages are often the possible costs.

In some cases, a considerable investment of resources is required; as a first example, the interviewer is associated with the costs of his or her training. An interviewer skilled in conducting an interview is often placed in training with another, more experienced interviewer. Moreover, both are sometimes remunerated. In this

training phase, the interviewer should develop certain skills on how to conduct an interview. These skills can only be formed with experience and therefore take time (Guidicini, 1995; Corrao, 2005).

The skill and competence with which an interview is conducted determines the quality of the final work performed by the interviewer (Campanini, 2000). I explore how once the researcher/interviewer's training is complete, she or he must be able to decide when and how to intervene in the interview without blocking the interviewee's statements and without suggesting the answer in any way (Corrao, 2005). Therefore, a disadvantage that is often associated with qualitative interviewing is that the interviewer/researcher can adopt manipulative techniques and suggest, even indirectly, the answers that the researcher is seeking for his or her research (Smith J.A. et al., 1995). Nevertheless, qualitative interviewing brings certain advantages. When the interviewee does not understand the question, the interviewer can repeat it using other words without changing the meaning of the question. The interviewer's presence can in certain circumstances be a helpful factor and reassure the respondent if the latter feels uncomfortable for any reason.

In addition, the respondent can easily go back to a previous question and change his or her answer. If the interviewer is skilful in conducting the interview, he/she can collect more qualitative and even quantitative data than he/she had planned before starting (Trentini, 1989, 1995, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Ricolfi, 1997; Campanini, 2000).

Mixed methods: new methodologies aimed at correlating quantitative and qualitative data

In this section of the chapter focusing on the mixed methods of data collection and how they can be related to each other, I explore some of the debates and studies pertaining to this field. Thus, in spite of criticisms questioning its *raison de résistance*, mixed methods research has been accepted in a number of researches as a methodology in its own right: the current section examines the nature of the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in terms of research designs, sampling and quality of interpretations (Giddings & Grant, 2007; Greene, 2008).

A particularly controversial issue has been the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research methods, which has been criticised by several scholars (Newman & Benz, 1998; Ridenour & Newman, 2008; Sechrest & Sidana, 1995). Bergman (2008) provides a general definition of mixed methods research as 'the combination of at least one qualitative and at least one quantitative component in a single research project or programme' (p. 1). According to Hanson et al., (2005), mixed methods research can be defined as 'the collection, analysis, and integration of quantitative and qualitative data in a single or multiphase study' (p. 224). In addition on the use of mixed methods, Tashakkori and Creswell (2007a) state that 'research in which the researcher collects and analyses different types of data, integrates the results and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or programme of enquiry' (p. 4).

Whilst, an increasing number of scholars in research methodology believe that qualitative and quantitative methods can coexist in a dialectical relationship and that findings from the two strands, being convergent or divergent, enhance the understanding of the phenomenon under study. In brief, in this section of Chapter 9, I continue to explore the fact that research would be enriched by both approaches (quantitative and qualitative), which together contribute to the nature of enquiry in social and educational research. In reverse, absent one or the other, many questions

would remain only partially answered or even wholly unanswered, as noted by some scholars (Newman & Benz, 1998; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002; Sechrest & Sidana, 1995; Tarrow, 2004).

Nevertheless, mixed methods validity issues have been considered by several researchers through presenting and evaluating validity frameworks. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006), for example, elaborated on the importance of validity and credibility of both quantitative and qualitative strands in a mixed design. Introducing the term legitimation, they argued that mixed methods research combines the 'complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For this reason, the assessment of the 'validity of results' could be complex; it is often due to the design used to relate quantitative and qualitative data (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Hall & Howard, 2008).

Hall and Howard (2008) state that both qualitative and quantitative methods can collaborate in a synergetic approach. Scholars also argue that there is no single mixed-methods design and that the way of relating some quantitative data to other qualitative data can be multiple, depending on what the research wants to highlight. In practical terms, how to relate these two different types of data, also depends on the specific research aim. In addition, to corroborate the above quotes by Hall and Howard (2008), some scholars such as Caracelli and Greene (1997), Chatterji (2004) and Ridenour and Newman (2008), assert that there is no single data collection design based on mixed methods, but rather there can be the ability to understand how the researcher relates the two different types of data and to argue about them in a dialogical manner.

The methodology and data collection techniques used in this research project

In this second to last section of the chapter, I report on both the methodology applied and the data collection techniques I used after the place-based outdoor experiential activities. As noted earlier, the data collection techniques (quantitative and qualitative data, through both interviews and questionnaires) when considered individually, presented weaknesses as already analysed in the third section of this chapter.

In this research project I have introduced a data collection technique in which the quantitative data (reported in numbers on a scale expressed between 0 and 10 centimetres), introduces the qualitative data expressed with the responses given by the focus group participants at the end of each shared experience. In the questionnaire itself, the participant was asked to answer the main question, first with a mark on the 10 centimetre line (*Slider Scale*). Then, the participant was asked to answer the same question, using words. The participant answered the same question, first by placing a mark on the 10-centimetre line and then responded by using words in the spaces provided below the 10-centimetre line.

It was explained to each participant that a mark above 5 centimetres on the 10 centimetre line would mean that she or he would want to repeat the shared experience (the same experience or a similar one in places with similar characteristics). Before handing out the questionnaire, when the research project was introduced and explained to the participants, it was emphasised that the mark left on the 10-centimetre line, the closer the 10-centimetre value would be, the more this would be considered as corresponding to a positive value on the part of the participant in wanting to repeat the experience.

In addition, in the same context it was explained that the sign below 5 centimetres and closer to 0, would mean that she or he would not want to repeat the shared experience or a similar one. As stated earlier, this modality was used in the

first phase of data collection using a 100mm line which follows the technique known as slider scales (or, visual analog scales), which are becoming increasingly popular in research studies of various types, in particular for collecting quantitative data (Gardner & Martin, 2007 et al.). These psychometric response scales use items in which respondents select a point along a line, labelled with bipolar endpoints to indicate their preference or agreement on the direct experience concluded (Albaum, 1997; Roster et al., 2015). In contrast, some scholars as Gardner and Martin (2007), describe Likert scales as inherently lumpy due to a tendency for people to bunch their responses on a Likert scale item at the extremes.

According to Pallotti (2021), he states in relation to slider scales that these (scales) have an advantage over *Likert scales* since 'the motivation of the continuous 100mm line is that the responses (which correspond to the marks left on the line that are then translated into numbers) can be treated as *continuous data*, whereas the classical Likert scales with their divisions into 4, 5, 6 etc. levels are ordinal scales, in which it is not clear whether '*much*' is twice as much as '*enough*'. In practical terms, some researchers/scholars use them in this manner, but incorrectly as all research methodology books suggest. Instead, a cross at 40mm from the origin is twice as far away as one at 20mm, and this is objective and allows the data to be treated as *continuous*' (Pallotti, 2021., Lectures for the 36th doctoral cycle Reggio childhood-studies).

The methodology adopted in this research project is based on a data collection design with the aim of connecting quantitative data and qualitative data: this methodology refers to the so called mixed methods model. This methodology made it possible to relate the quantitative data collected with the qualitative data in order to more clearly show the findings of the place-based experiences carried out during the experiential phase. Data on the experiential place-based activities were collected by means of a questionnaire handed out to the students at the end of each experience with one main question and two others to follow. The second and third questions are intended to elaborate on the first main question.

This structure of the questionnaire, which can be defined as a *cascade*, determines the fact that by reading the 3 answers given by the students (from the main question to the other two sub-questions), these answers give rise to a single answer that comes as close as possible to the structure of an interview. In addition, it is possible to state that any number expressed between 0 and 10 cm on a straight line has a universal value, because the metric system always expresses the same quantitative meanings connected to numbers when it is applied (Zamperlin, 2000; Calcatelli, 1994). Therefore, the questionnaire used in this research project can be reused with other focus groups to then implement a comparative data analysis.

Example of a questionnaire administered to participants

Scheda di valutazione sui progetti di “Outdoor Adventure Education” prima fase

Istituto _____ Anno scolastico _____ Data _____ classe _____
Nome: anonimoXXX
Età partecipante: Maschio Femmina
Nome dell’esperto esterno solo se presente:

Per ogni domanda traccia un segno con la penna sulla linea di 10 cm che troverai qui sotto: più il segno sarà spostato verso sx e meno ti è interessato l’argomento a cui si riferisce la domanda, se poni il segno della penna più verso dx, significa che invece ti è interessato l’argomento a cui si riferisce la domanda. *La scala di riferimento va da zero a dieci.*

(For each question, draw a mark with the pen on the 10 cm line below: the further to the left the mark is, the less interested you are in the topic of the question; if you place the pen mark further to the right, you are interested in the topic of the question. The scale ranges from zero to ten)

1) Ritieni che l’intervento dell’esperto esterno (avventuriero o esperto nel settore della sostenibilità) abbia creato in te maggiore desiderio di fare una esperienza avventurosa che sia anche sostenibile per il luogo ove questa avverrà?

(Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert -adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?)

0-----5-----10

1) Ritieni che l’intervento dell’esperto esterno (avventuriero o esperto nel settore della sostenibilità) abbia creato in te maggiore desiderio di fare una esperienza avventurosa che sia anche sostenibile per il luogo ove questa avverrà? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

(Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert -adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?) Try to explain in your own words why: Yes No

translation into english

2) Ritieni che l’intervento dell’esperto esterno e gli argomenti che ha trattato, possano ispirarti a fare maggiore attività esperienziale nella natura con lo scopo di ritrovare un legame più forte con essa?

(Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he discussed can inspire you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it?)

0-----5-----10

2) Ritieni che l'intervento dell'esperto esterno e gli argomenti che ha trattato, possano ispirarti a fare maggiore attività esperienziale nella natura con lo scopo di ritrovare un legame più forte con essa? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché:
Sì No

(Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he/she discussed can help you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it?) Try to explain in your own words why: Yes No

translation into english

3) Ritieni che una esperienza avventurosa possa creare in te un senso di maggiore cura e affetto per il luogo dove prende luogo l'esperienza?

(Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?)

0-----5-----10

3) Ritieni che una esperienza avventurosa possa creare in te un senso di maggiore cura e affetto per il luogo dove prende luogo l'esperienza? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

(Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?) Try to explain in your own words why: Yes No

translation into english

4) Quante ore passi su un qualsiasi device, i social network, realtà virtuale al giorno? [.....]

4) How many hours do you use a device, a social network, or virtual reality per day? [.....]

Example of a questionnaire administered to participants

Scheda di valutazione sui progetti di “Outdoor Adventure Education” *seconda fase*

Istituto Anno scolastico Data classe

Nome: anonimoXXX

Età partecipante: Maschio Femmina

Nome dell’esperto esterno solo se presente:

Per ogni domanda traccia un segno con la penna sulla linea di 10 cm che troverai qui sotto: più il segno sarà spostato verso sx e meno ti è interessato l’argomento a cui si riferisce la domanda, se poni il segno della penna più verso dx, significa che invece ti è interessato l’argomento a cui si riferisce la domanda. *La scala di riferimento va da zero a dieci.*

(For each question, draw a mark with the pen on the 10 cm line below: the further to the left the mark is, the less interested you are in the topic of the question; if you place the pen mark further to the right, you are interested in the topic of the question. The scale ranges from zero to ten)

1) Ritieni che l’intervento dell’esperto esterno (avventuriero o esperto nel settore della sostenibilità) abbia creato in te maggiore desiderio di fare una esperienza avventurosa che sia anche sostenibile per il luogo ove questa avverrà?

(Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert -adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?)

0-----5-----10

1) Ritieni che l’intervento dell’esperto esterno (avventuriero o esperto nel settore della sostenibilità) abbia creato in te maggiore desiderio di fare una esperienza avventurosa che sia anche sostenibile per il luogo ove essa avrà luogo? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

(Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert -adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place? Try to explain in your own words why: Yes No)

translation into english

2) L’esperienza diretta che hai avuto in questo luogo vicino la tua scuola-casa, può essere più significativa per comprendere le questioni ecologiche locali dei luoghi dove vivi?

(Can the direct experience you had in this place near your school-home be more significant for understanding the local ecological issues of the places where you live?)

0-----5-----10

2) L'esperienza diretta che hai avuto in questo luogo vicino la tua scuola-casa, può essere più significativa per comprendere le questioni ecologiche locali dei luoghi dove vivi? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

(Can the direct experience you had in this place near your school-home be more significant for understanding the local ecological issues of the places where you live? Try to explain in your own words why: Yes No)

translation into english

3) L'esperienza che hai vissuto legata a questo luogo e la sua comunità la quale produce artigianato/cibo/arte secondo tradizioni locali basate sui materiali trovati solo in quei luoghi, tradizioni basate sulla ricerca di un equilibrio tra uomo e ambiente circostante, possono essere fonte di ispirazione per un tuo cambiamento verso un tuo agire quotidiano più sostenibile?

0-----5-----10

Can your experience with this place and its community, which produces handicrafts/food/art according to local traditions based on materials found only there, traditions based on the search for a balance between man and the surrounding environment, be a source of inspiration for your own change towards a more sustainable daily action?

3) L'esperienza che hai vissuto legata a questo luogo e la sua comunità la quale produce artigianato/cibo/arte secondo tradizioni locali basate sui materiali trovati solo in quei luoghi, tradizioni basate sulla ricerca di un equilibrio tra uomo e ambiente circostante, possono essere fonte di ispirazione per un tuo cambiamento verso un tuo agire quotidiano più sostenibile? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

translation into english

4) Quante ore passi su un qualsiasi device, i social network, realtà virtuale al giorno? [.....]

4) How many hours do you use a device, a social network, or virtual reality per day? [.....]

On the two previous pages transcribed above, I have reproduced the questionnaire that was used during the first indoor experiential phase. In the questions asked, this questionnaire is the same as the questionnaire which was also administered to the participants during the second outdoor phase. There are two different headings in the opening of the initial pages as *indoor phase* (using the colour *yellow*) and *outdoor phase* (using the colour *green*) so that the work of transcribing the responses of the two phases would not be confused.

The above questionnaire has a simple basic structure so that the participant could report their thoughts/emotions each time a shared experience or place-based experiential activity was accomplished. As can be noted from the questionnaire, the participant is initially requested to place a mark (after reading the question) on the 10 cm line. Secondly, the participant is asked the same question again, but instead of placing a mark on a 10 cm line (*slider scale*), they are asked to respond to the question using the words that best describe the thoughts and emotions they felt in relation to the direct experiences they had.

The mark on the line (slider scale) requested of all participants (21 students), made it possible, after the collection of data and its transcription, to give rise to a graph showing the aggregate quantitative data of all participants and thus showing a group trend of the carried out experiences. The quantitative data (expressed in centimetres on the slider scale) transcribed resulting from the marks placed by the participants and the interpretation of the related graph on the following pages, permits the quantitative data from the 7 direct experiences to be used to introduce the qualitative data reported in chapters 10 and 11 of this research project. In doing so, the *quantitative data* in this research, has the function of *introducing the qualitative data*.

The following documents and graphs will be analysed on the next pages: an example of a questionnaire used by a participant, the two graphs that collect all the quantitative data from both the indoor and outdoor phases which are a means to introduce the qualitative data (reported and analysed in Chapters 10 and 11), two graphs that report only the slider scale numbers that refer to each shared experience.

Example of questionnaire administered and both quantitative and qualitative data emerged: participant #Albero_09

Scheda di valutazione sui progetti di "Outdoor Adventure Education" *pre-test*

Istituto: I.C. FERMI Anno scolastico 21/22 Data 26 NOV classe II F
 Nome: anonimoXXX#ALBERO09
 Et  participant : 12 Maschio Femmina
 Nome dell'esperto esterno solo se presente: DAVIDE UGOLINI

Per ogni domanda traccia un segno con la penna sulla linea di 10 cm che troverai qui sotto: pi  il segno sar  spostato verso sx e meno ti   interessato l'argomento a cui si riferisce la domanda, se poni il segno della penna pi  verso dx, significa che invece ti   interessato l'argomento a cui si riferisce la domanda. La scala di riferimento va da zero a dieci.

(For each question, draw a mark with the pen on the 10 cm line below. The further to the left the mark is, the less interested you are in the topic of the question. If you place the pen mark further to the right, you are interested in the topic of the question. The scale ranges from zero to ten)

1) Ritieni che l'intervento dell'esperto esterno (avventuriero o esperto nel settore della sostenibilit ) abbia creato in te maggiore desiderio di fare una esperienza avventurosa che sia anche sostenibile per il luogo ove questa avverr ?

(Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert (adventurer or sustainability expert) has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?)



1) Ritieni che l'intervento dell'esperto esterno (avventuriero o esperto nel settore della sostenibilit ) abbia creato in te maggiore desiderio di fare una esperienza avventurosa che sia anche sostenibile per il luogo ove questa avverr ? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perch : SÌ No

(Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert (adventurer or sustainability expert) has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?) Try to explain in your own words why. Yes No

L'AVVENTURIERO OGGI HA AUMENTATO ANCORA DI PI  IL MIO INTERESSE VERSO IL FARE UN'ESPERIENZA CHE SIA EMOZIONANTE E SUGGERIVA MA AL TEMPO STESSA CHE SIA SOSTENIBILE PER L'AMBIENTE E SOSPESO PER LA NATURA CHE TI CIRCONDA

INT

translation into english

2) Ritieni che l'intervento dell'esperto esterno e gli argomenti che ha trattato, possano ispirarti a fare maggiore attivit  esperienziale nella natura con lo scopo di ritrovare un legame pi  forte con essa?

(Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he discussed can inspire you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it?)



Example of questionnaire administered and both quantitative and qualitative data emerged: participant #Albero_09

2) Ritieni che l'intervento dell'esperto esterno e gli argomenti che ha trattato, possano ispirarti a fare maggiore attività esperienziale nella natura con lo scopo di ritrovare un legame più forte con essa? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

(Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he has treated can help you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it? Try to explain in your own words why? Yes No

SÌ PERCHÉ, MI INTERESSA A GUARDARE LA NATURA CON OCCHI DIVERSI E DI ANIMARMI AD ESSA E FARE UNA AVVENTURA COMPLETAMENTE IMMERSI NELLA NATURA SAREBBE UN'ESPERIENZA INDIMENTICABILE CHE MI INTERESSA A ~~NON~~ SENTIRE UN POCO E PENSARE SOLO A STARE BENE E A DIVERGERSI

translation into english

3) Ritieni che una esperienza avventurosa possa creare in te un senso di maggiore cura e affetto per il luogo dove prende luogo l'esperienza?

(Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?)

0 _____ 5 _____ 8.5 _____ 10

3) Ritieni che una esperienza avventurosa possa creare in te un senso di maggiore cura e affetto per il luogo dove prende luogo l'esperienza? Cerca di spiegare con le tue parole perché: Sì No

(Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?) Try to explain in your own words why? Yes No

SÌ PERCHÉ, VIVERE UN'ESPERIENZA AVVENTUROSA IN UN LUOGO MI INTERESSA A RISPETTARLO E DI ANIMARMI AD ESSA GUARDANDO LA PIÙ DA VICINO E AFFEZIONANDOMI DI PIÙ A TUTTO CIÒ CHE MI CIRCONDA. MI INTERESSA ANCHE A USARE MENO IL TELEFONO, COMPUTER, ...

translation into english

4) Quante ore passi su un qualsiasi device, i social network, realtà virtuale al giorno? [A.]

(How many hours do you use a device, a social network, or virtual reality per day? [-])

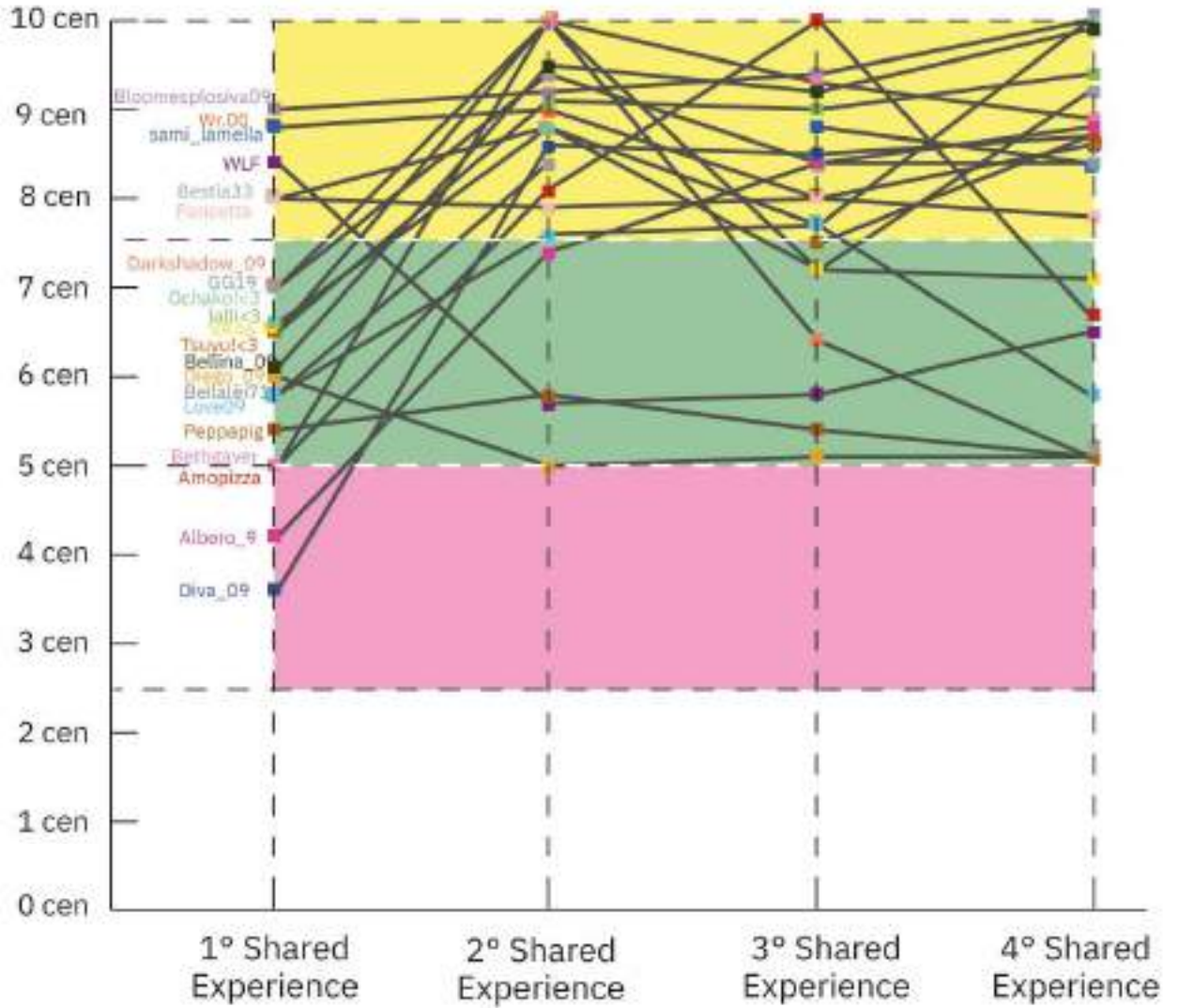
Example of a questionnaire used by a participant and how the data were used to give rise to the quantitative data graph

On the previous two pages, the questionnaire reported highlights how the participant is asked, via the main question, to place a mark on the slider scale below the question. In the above document, it can be seen that for each of the three questions (one main question, two sub-questions to elaborate on the first one) the participant is asked to place a mark on a slider scale: in total, therefore, 3 data relating to the 3 slider scales for each question. In the graph representing all the quantitative data of the 4 indoor experiences, only the first quantitative data expressed in centimetres was used: #Albero_09 marks 7.4, 7.6 and 8.5 centimetres respectively to answer the three questions in sequence referring to the second shared experience.

The quantitative data 7.4 centimetres was taken into account to give rise to the graph 'outdoor experience quantitative data'. It was decided to keep 3 slider scales for each question, even though it was known in advance that only the first data from the first slider scale would be used, so that any discrepancies between quantitative and qualitative data could be deduced. Example: 3.5 centimetres on the slider and use of words in the positive qualitative data by the participant that would lead the researcher to infer that the participant wanted to repeat the direct experience performed (or vice versa: 8.5 on the slider scale and use of words that would lead the researcher to infer that the participant did not want to repeat the experience).

These discrepancies never emerged during all 7 shared experiences.

Shared experiences: first indoor phase



*Cen = centimeters

- The student's lived experience clearly achieves the goal of seeking to repeat the same or a similar experience.
- The student's lived experience achieves the goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.
- The student's lived experience does not achieve the goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.
- The student's lived experience does not achieve the minimum goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.

Shared experiences: first indoor phase

Name	Age	1st Ind. Ex.	2nd Ind. Ex.	3rd Ind. Ex.	4th Ind. Ex.
Albero 9	12, female	4,2	7,4	8,4	8,8
Amopizza	12, female	5	8,1	10	6,7
Bellalei71	12, female	5,8	8,4		5,7
Bellina_09	12, female	6,1	9,5	9,2	9,9
Bestia33	12, male	8	8,8	7,2	9,2
Bettigaver	11, male	5	10	9,3	8,9
Bloomesplosiva09	12, female	9	9,2	9,4	10
Darkshadow_09	12, male	7	10	6,4	5,6
Diego_09	12, male	6	5	5,6	5,6
Diva_09	12, female	3,6	8,6	8,5	8,7
GG19	12, female	7	9,4	8,4	8,4
Ialli<3	12, female	6,5	9,1	9	9,4
Love09	11, female	5,8	7,6	7,7	5,8
Ochako!<3	12, female	6,6	8,8	7,7	10
Pancetta	12, male	8	7,9	8	7,8
Peppapig	12, female	5,4	5,8	5,4	5,6
sami_lamella	12, male	8,8		8,8	8,4
Tsuyui<3	12, female	6,5		7,5	8,7
VR46	12, female	6,5	10	7,2	7,1
WLF	11, male	8,4	5,7	5,8	6,5
Wr.00	11, female	8,8	9	8	8,6

Graph analysis on quantitative data on the 4 indoor shared experiences

The graphs above represent the quantitative data of the 4 indoor shared experiences. Beginning with and observing the individual numerical data associated to each participant, the final analysis inferred refers to the entire group and not to individual participants. By observing the quantitative data of each individual shared experience, it is possible to hypothesise a group trend for each experience carried out.

Quantitative data first indoor shared experience: it emerges from the data that in the second range, between 2.5 and 5 centimetres, only two participants placed the mark on the slider scale (3.6 centimetres and 4.2). Two other participants placed the mark on the slider scale, both a reading of 5 centimetres: this data can be considered neutral as it is equidistant between 0 and 10 centimetres. In the third range between 5 centimetres and 7.5 centimetres, 11 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last segment, between 7.5 centimetres and 10 centimetres, 6 participants placed a mark on the slider scale.

Quantitative data second indoor shared experience: It emerges that in both the bands between 0 and 2.5 centimetres and 2.5 and 5 centimetres, not one participant placed a mark on the slider scale. A participant placed a mark on the number 5 of the slider scale. In the third band between 5 and 7.5 centimetres, 3 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last band, between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, 15 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. Two participants were not present.

Quantitative data third indoor shared experience: It shows that in both ranges between 0 and 2.5 centimetres and between 2.5 and 5 centimetres, not a single participant placed a mark on the slider scale. In the third range, between 5 and 7.5 centimetres, 6 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last range, between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, 13 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. One participant was not present.

Quantitative data fourth indoor shared experience: The graph shows that in both segments, between 0 and 2.5 centimetres and between 2.5 and 5 centimetres, not one participant placed a mark on the slider scale. In the third range, between 5 and 7.5 centimetres, 8 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last range, between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, 13 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. All participants were present.

Analysis of the quantitative data of the 4 indoor shared experiences

The graphs above, both the one with the lines and the one with the table and numbers only, illustrate the quantitative data of the 4 indoor shared experiences. The quantitative data on the slider scales, reveal that in the first shared experience, there are two data elements under 5 centimetres.

At the same time, there are two 5 cm data marks. In the following shared experience, with the first adventurer Davide Ugolini, there are no marks between the bands between 0 and 5 centimetres. Instead, the graphs with both lines and numbers shows in the range between 7.5 centimetres and 10 centimetres, the mark left by 15 participants. In the third and fourth shared indoor experiences, in the last range between 7.5 centimetres and 10 centimetres, in both experiences always 13 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. At the same time in both the third and fourth shared experiences, no participants placed a mark in the first two ranges between 0 and 5 centimetres.

Analysis of the quantitative data from the 4 ranges of the graph with the lines (0/2.5, 2.5/5, 5/7.5, 7.5/10 centimetres)

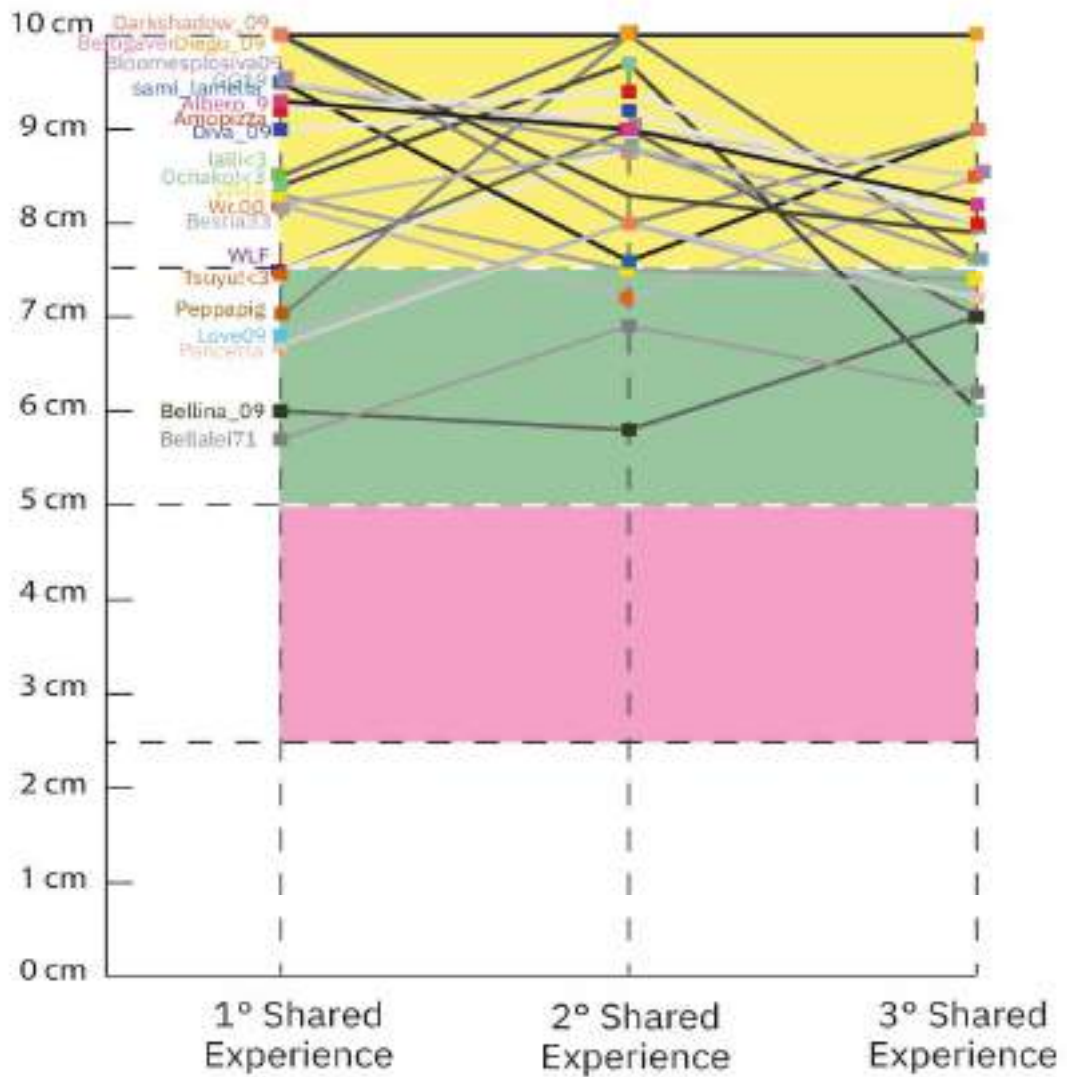
Taking into account that the fourth band, the one between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, expresses a clear willingness on the part of the participant to repeat the same or a similar experience; the experience shared with the adventurer Davide Ugolini shows the quantitative data (15) of the marks left on the slider scale to be the highest when compared to the other 3 shared experiences.

At the same time, in the experience shared with Davide two participants were not present. By observing the trend of the lines and numbers in the tables above, it can be deduced that the majority of participants placed a value expressed in numbers on

the slider scale higher in the second shared experience, when compared to the first experience. The quantitative data from the third and fourth indoor experience, on the other hand, do not show a clear trend towards higher values or the opposite, as each participant from the third experience up to the fourth showed his or her own personal trend that cannot give rise to a clear trend shown by the group.

In practical terms, it emerges from the graphs that the majority of the participants (15) would prefer to repeat the same or a similar shared experience as in the second shared one. *It can be deduced that almost all participants placed a higher value on the slider scale in the second experience than in the first shared experience.* Moreover, as a group trend that clearly emerges, all participants from the first indoor to the second shared experience placed a higher value on the slider scale. From the third shared experience to the fourth, no clear trend emerges that can be stated to exist; this can be affirmed in relation to the fact that after the second shared experience, each participant drew a mark on the slider scale which in some cases confirmed the values observed in the second experience, in other cases went in the opposite direction.

Shared experiences: first outdoor phase



*Cen = centimeters

- The student's lived experience clearly achieves the goal of seeking to repeat the same or a similar experience.
- The student's lived experience achieves the goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.
- The student's lived experience does not achieve the goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.
- The student's lived experience does not achieve the minimum goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.

Shared experiences: second outdoor phase

Name	Age	1st Out. Ex.	2nd Out. Ex.	3rd Out. Ex.
Albero 9	12, female	9,3	9,0	8,2
Amopizza	12, female	9,2	9,4	8,0
Bellalei71	12, female	5,7	6,9	6,2
Bellina_09	12, female	6,0	5,8	7,0
Bestia33	12, male	8,2	8,8	8,0
Bettigaver	11, male	10	8,3	7,9
Bloomesplosiva09	12, female	9,5	9,0	8,5
Darkshadow_09	12, male	10	8,0	9,0
Diego_09	12, male	10	10	10
Diva_09	12, female	9	9,2	8,0
GG19	12, female	9,5	8,8	7,6
lalli<3	12, female	8,5	10	7,6
Love09	11, female	6,8	8,0	7,0
Ochako!<3	12, female	8,4	9,7	6,0
Pancetta	12, male	6,7	8,0	7,2
Peppapig	12, female	7,0	10	
sami_lamella	12, male	9,5	7,6	9,0
Tsuyul<3	12, female	7,5	8,8	8,0
VR46	12, female	8,3	7,5	7,4
WLF	11, male	7,5	9,0	7,0
Wr.00	11, female	8,2	7,2	8,5

Graph analysis of the quantitative data of the 3 outdoor shared experiences

The graphs above, both the one with the lines and the one with the table and numbers only, illustrate the quantitative data of the 3 outdoor shared experiences. The data shows that in both the first and second bands, between 0 centimetres up to 5 centimetres, not one participant for 3 consecutive outdoor experiences placed a mark on the slider scale in these segments.

Furthermore, there is no numerical data of 5. These quantitative data deviate from the previous data from the indoor phases, as in the first 4 shared experiences, several participants (5) placed a mark on the slider scale below 5 centimetres or a mark on 5 centimetres. *It can be deduced that the outdoor experiences show consistently positive quantitative data compared to the indoor shared experiences.*

Quantitative data first outdoor shared experience: The data show that not a single participant placed a mark in the first two bands (0 to 5 centimetres). In the third range, between 5 and 7.5 centimetres, 7 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last segment, between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, 14 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. All participants were present.

Quantitative data second outdoor shared experience: The data show that not a single participant placed a mark in the first two bands (0 to 5 centimetres). In the third range, between 5 and 7.5 centimetres, 4 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last range, always between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, 17 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. All participants were present.

Quantitative data third outdoor shared experience: The data show that not a single participant placed a mark in the first two bands (0 to 5 centimetres). In the third range, between 5 and 7.5 centimetres, 7 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. In the last range, always between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, 13 participants placed a mark on the slider scale. One student was not participating.

Analysis of the quantitative data of the 4 ranges of the graphs with the lines and tables with data corresponding to the numbers of the slider scales. (0/2.5, 2.5/5, 5/7.5, 7.5/10 centimetres)

Taking into account that the fourth range, the one between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, expresses a clear willingness on the part of the participant to repeat the same or a similar experience, reading the data above the second experience shared outdoors, specifically at the Marecchia Oasis park on the Marecchia river cycle path, shows the presence of a mark on the slider scale by 17 participants of a total of 21.

This very clear quantitative data demonstrates the fact that among the 3 shared outdoor experiences, this is the one the students would most like to repeat compared to the other two outdoor experiences. In addition, observing the graph with the slider scales, it is immediately evident that only two participants (Bellalei71 and Bellina_09) placed marks on the slider scale with a common tendency that sees them both place a numerical value between 5.8 and 7 centimetres. The other 19 participants, continuously for all three outdoor shared experiences, expressed values between 7 and 10 on the slider scale.

This positive and consistent trend for all outdoor experiences, with data expressed between 7 centimetres and 10, is not present in the previous four indoor experiences. *A numerical data in this range, between 7 and 10 centimetres, is only present for the outdoor experiences.* The quantitative data, however, do not indicate why it is precisely this shared experience (the second shared outdoor experience) that

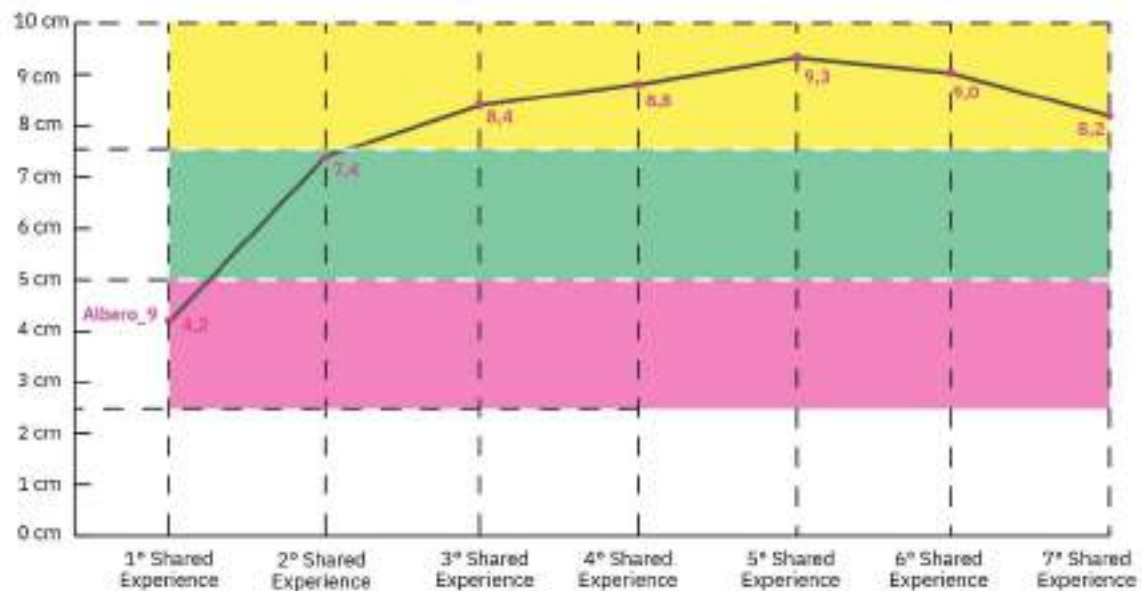
participants would like to repeat as the data is not based on the use of words. Taking into account the mixed methods design used in this research project, it becomes crucial in Chapter 11 to analyse the qualitative data from the students' questionnaires in order to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative data.

As previously pointed out, the quantitative data reported on the slider scales becomes relevant for deducing the general trend of each shared experience carried out; nevertheless, the analysis of the qualitative data in relation to the data emerging from the slider scales permits a more complete and in-depth interpretation of the 7 shared experiences undertaken by the focus group.

A window on the methodology adopted in chapters 10-11: the example of Albero_09. The quantitative data introduces the qualitative data.

Albero_9

Shared experiences: first indoor phase and second outdoor phase



*Cen = centimeters

- The student's lived experience clearly achieves the goal of seeking to repeat the same or a similar experience.
- The student's lived experience achieves the goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.
- The student's lived experience does not achieve the goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.
- The student's lived experience does not achieve the minimum goal of seeking to repeat the same or similar experience.

Analysis of the slider scale graph and the responses from Albero_09 as an introduction to chapters 10-11.

The slider scale graph above shows the 7 experiences accomplished by Albero_09. It can be noted that the first experience is below the value of 5 centimetres, making it the only experience that student would not want to repeat. Nevertheless, the numerical value of 4.2 does not explain why this choice was made by the participant. In the responses below, I connect the numerical value (quantitative data) to the qualitative data (reported in words) expressed through the recurring themes present in the sentences written as responses by Albero_09. This section serves as an example of what will be reported in Chapters 10 and 11 with the qualitative data. The slider scales are expressed in millimetres, however in this research project the data will be expressed in centimetres to facilitate reading and also to apply graphics in the graphs, which are clearer and more readable.

First shared experience #albero_9 (4.2 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that *'The intervention of an adventurer would encourage me to go on new adventures by telling me about his experiences, explaining environmental problems and telling me about his daily gestures. He would give me a good example to follow and it would be more interesting to go on an adventure in nature, but first I want to see what he is like. If I had a good example from the adventurer, I would be more committed to eco-friendly gestures and actions in order not to pollute. But I don't know if I will have this experience'*.

Second shared experience #Albero_09 (7.4 centimetres on the slider scale) states that *'Adventurer today increased my interest in having an adventurous experience even more that is exciting and evocative, but at the same time is environmentally sustainable and respectful of the nature around me. I would look at nature with different eyes and make an adventurous experience immersed in nature*

would be an unforgettable experience and would help me not to feel the fatigue and think only to *feel good and have fun. An adventurous experience would help me to respect the place of the experience*, it would also help me to use the computer and telephone less.

Third shared experience #Albero_09 (8.4 centimetres on the slider scale) claims that *'Listening to Andrea's adventures, I feel driven to undertake new adventures* and, in doing so, I would have fun and improve something in myself. If I went on an adventure, I would admire the place and nature, I would also observe animals that I do not know. *After an adventure in an extraordinary place, it would be impossible for me to pollute it.* I would love to go for a run on Monte Carpegna!

Fourth shared experience #Albero_09 (8.8 centimetres on the slider scale) states that *'Among the experiences proposed by Werther, I would like to try the swim-run but in pairs at the pine forest of Milano Marittima*, because in addition to being interesting and *fun and adventurous*, it would also be a moment of friendship and curiosity to experience that place. *It would be disrespectful to pollute the area one knows after the sporting adventure*, in fact it would mean ruining our territory.

Fifth shared experience #Albero_09 (9.3 centimetres on the slider scale) claims that *'The experience in Mutonia inspires me to try and reuse old objects at home for new purposes.* Mutonia is close to home and *I will return there with friends or relatives to have another similar experience.* The experience I had is meaningful to me because the community that lives in Mutonia is able to live without having to buy and therefore waste. They only use waste materials to make art. *Mutonia is the right place to reflect on my actions because it inspires me to respect the Earth* more and thanks to the workshop I also created a sustainable artwork!

Sixth shared experience #Albero_09 (9.0 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘Thanks to the experience at the oasis and the help of Werther and then Davide, *we explored this new place outdoors and I learnt a lot more instead of being in the classroom. The oasis is always open and I will definitely return there to have this experience again. The direct experience in this place taught me to respect nature more, to think about environmental issues.* The experience itself was a lot of *fun* and I enjoyed the wild cherries we found in the nature oasis because they have a completely different taste than bought fruit.

Seventh shared experience #Albero_09 (8.2 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that ‘The work of the salt miners really impressed me, *I now understand what sustainable human activity means and also the concept of biodiversity. I touched and tasted the salt*, which has a taste all of its own: it is different from what I have at home, *it is sweeter, strange but unique. This experience made me realise that we should use food produced close to home*, it would be more sustainable for our life. How nice, the salt workers made me collect salt! And then I took it home! I observed that the salt miners at work extract what nature gives, only what they need.

Analysis of the indoor phase inherent in the direct experiences of Albero_09

In the responses pertaining to the first 4 indoor experiences, it is possible to note the recurring theme of how adventures narrated in presence by adventurers were mentioned several times as a source of inspiration to bring to life their own of adventurous experiences. In addition, often Albero_09 affirms the thought that after an adventurous experience she might develop a greater sense of care and affection for the place of the experience. In the last shared experience, the pine forest of Milano

Marittima through swim-run is mentioned as a place to implement the experiential activity, although this would be more sporty than adventurous.

Analysis of the outdoor phase of the place-based experiences of Albero_09

The responses and recurring themes noted in the experiences accomplished by Albero_09, were influenced and inspired by the unique site specificities of the place-based experiential activities. The student states that she would repeat the experience in Mutonia with friends or family members, also affirms that Mutonia is the right place to understand sustainability issues. The lifestyle of the Mutoids, impressed the participant on how one can reuse waste material to bring artistic works to life and buy fewer things.

The experience accomplished at L'Oasi Parco Marecchia, highlights how Albero_09 affirms that he learned many more things in an outdoor setting than one inside 4 walls. Moreover, he states that since the park is always open, he will surely repeat the experience again. A special note, expressed by the student, for being able to taste some wild fruit, having tasted it, and then comparing it with what one normally buys noting the difference in taste.

From the responses reported from the direct experience that student had at the Camillone salt pan, it is noticeable that the participant was impressed by the work of the salt workers and that thanks to it, after the experience, it became clearer what sustainable human activity and the concept of Biodiversity means. In addition, it emerges as in the previous experience, the fact that having been able to taste the salt through this experience noted that the taste is completely different when compared with salt at home.

Summary

In this chapter I have analysed and developed some themes concerning the methodology that was used in this research project drawing on some existing data collection techniques used for both qualitative and quantitative studies. It emerged from the first section of this chapter that the use of a questionnaire brings advantages and disadvantages, even in the case of qualitative data collection (Manganelli Rattazzi, 1990; Guidicini, 1995; Zammuner, 1996, 1998).

At the same time, in the second section of the seventh chapter, I analysed the advantages and disadvantages of using the interview in qualitative data collection (Corrao, 2005 et al.). After careful analysis, the two different types of data collection both demonstrate strengths and weaknesses which, it is possible to state, are often structural and related to the different types of techniques used (Manganelli Rattazzi, 1990; Guidicini, 1995; Zammuner, 1996; Bailey, 1998; Corrao, 2005). In order to go beyond the weaknesses I analysed and highlighted in sections 1 and 2 of this chapter, in the third section, I explored the use of mixed methods with regard to data collection and how these are related.

These ultimately aim to relate quantitative data to other, qualitative data from the same study or vice versa. As noted by several scholars from this field of research such as Hall and Howard (2008), Caracelli and Greene (1997), Chatterji (2004) and Ridenour and Newman (2008), the methodological validity of a mixed methods depends above all on its design and the purpose the research set out to analyse.

As noted earlier, scholars affirm the fact that there is no single mixed methods design, however, there can be a proper interrelation of the use of quantitative data connected to qualitative data. In practical terms, a correctly planned mixed methods design leads to a reading of the data that can be more complete with fewer phenomena in the study that would otherwise not emerge, when compared to the use of a quantitative-only or qualitative-only data survey (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006;

Hall & Howard, 2008; Newman & Benz, 1998; Sechrest & Sidana, 1995; Bergman, 2008; Hanson et al., (2005); Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007a). In the last section of this chapter, I introduced the methodology that was used in this research project regarding data collection and how to relate them, with the final aim of having a clearer understanding of the final findings of the phenomenon I studied, using a Slider Scale (with quantitative data) related to qualitative data (Albaum, 1997; Roster et al., 2015; Gardner & Martin, 2007; Pallotti, 2021., Lectures for the 36th doctoral cycle Reggio childhood-studies).

The example above concerning Albero_09 serves primarily as an example for the layout of the methodology to be found in chapters 10-11. As far as clear emerging themes can be deduced from the responses of Albero_09, chapters 10-11 contain the responses of the focus group consisting of 21 students. The large number of participants allows for a clearer view of the emotional, relational responses and the transformative experiences they as a group had during this research project.

As stated by Pallotti (2021), the Slider scale is a more accurate data measurement instrument than the Likert scale. This made it possible to obtain continuous data for all seven shared focus group experiences undertaken. The aim is to use the quantitative data to introduce the qualitative data that will be analysed in chapters 10-11. The use of the slider scale by each participant gave rise to two graphs (indoor/outdoor) from which it clearly emerges that the outdoor experiences were for 19 participants out of 21, consistently between 7 and 10 centimetres on a scale that originates from 0 to 10 centimetres. The slider scales are expressed in millimetres, however in this research project the data has been reported in centimetres for ease of reading and also to apply graphics in the graphs, which can be clearer and more immediate.

Chapter 10: first phase indoor with adventurers

Introduction

In this chapter, I report and analyse the responses provided by the focus group participants concerning the first phase of this research project. The first shared experiences involved the interaction between two adventurers and the 21 participants. The figure of the adventurer has been investigated by a group of scholars. Lyng, for example (1990), states how adventurers or athletes who engage in adventurous practices are extremely meticulous in their preparation and do not take risks considered unnecessary for the purpose of their adventure. According to Krein (2007) and Brymer (2010), adventure athletes do not seem to have the goal of maximising risk, on the contrary, they seek a type of control that derives from the levels of experience from other adventure experiences that has been gained over the time.

Nevertheless, recalling what was stated above (Krein, 2007; Brymer, 2010), some scholars such as Brymer, Downey and Gray (2009) noted how athletes performing adventurous practices initially gained a reputation for being focused on risk and adrenaline, even though this did not correspond to the reality of the facts. This viewpoint has obscured the place of the natural world, making it appear that extreme athletes seek to conquer, compete against or defeat natural forces. In contrast, Brymer, Downey and Gray (2009) suggest that adventure sports practitioners can initiate *positive change* in the relationships between participants of outdoors activities and the natural world. Adventurers report that, through the activity, they gained greater awareness that humanity is connected to the natural world.

This connection is manifest as experiences of being at one with the natural world and being part of a powerful positive energy. As a result, some adventurers discussed how they came to care more about and to protect the natural world (Brymer, Downey & Gray, 2009).

Adventurers describe themselves as being one with the natural world or as being connected to nature through a positive energy that enhances their perception of life if they implement adventurous practices that are environmentally friendly.

These feelings described by adventurer athletes, as pointed out by Brymer, Downey and Gray (2009), can reinforce a sense of connection with nature and lead to a desire to care for the natural world, contributing to reflection on the implementation of more environmentally sustainable outdoor practices. *Being 'at one' with the natural world* was the dominant theme that could be extracted from the interviews undertaken with the adventurers in this study (Brymer, Downey & Gray, 2009). Reconnecting what was stated earlier with the thinking of some adventurers, Brymer (2010) points out that adventure athletes are often not thoughtless who take unacceptable risks for the sole purpose of feeling the maximum adrenalin rush.

Lyng (1990), Krein (2007) and Brymer (2010), state that adventure athletes seek a high degree of control over what they are doing. Whilst, as stated by adventurers such as Gregoretti (2019) and Di Giorgio (2023), going beyond one's physical capabilities leads one to lack lucidity, and in certain extreme situations, this condition of lack of full awareness of the circumstances one is experiencing, can lead to make wrong choices that in extreme environments can be fatal. In doing so, the ultimate goal for several adventurers is to complete the adventure, taking necessary risks without going beyond certain limits determined by the circumstances of those places at those times, as returning home and recounting the experience is also part of the adventure (Gregoretti, 2019; Di Giorgio, 2023; Ugolini, D., interview 2022).

In the literature review, I noted that the figure of the adventurer and her or his interaction with participants of a research project (students or others) have not been extensively researched or are missing, particularly within outdoor education. In this chapter, the focus shifts to the first indoor experiential phase involving the interaction between two adventurers and the focus group consisting of 21 students from a middle school in Rimini (Romagna) between 12 and 13 years.

-Can adventures, by narrating their own stories, motivate students to undertake micro-adventures in places where human activities are sustainable or in defense of biodiversity?

With the aim of researching and deepening the above-mentioned theme, the following questions were posed in the questionnaire administered to the 21 students who took part in the focus group. The first question is the main question that is the focus of the research project; the other two questions that follow are designed to deepen the first question, thus moving closer to the structure of an open interview:

-Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert - adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?

-Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he discussed can inspire you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it?

-Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?

Criteria for selecting responses

Each participant, as previously outlined in Chapter 9, is mentioned in this section and with them the responses that were transcribed from their questionnaire, using the nickname they chose during their first shared experience. For each experience, I report

3 participant responses by selecting them from the 4 bands of the line graph reproducing the aggregated quantitative data reported in Chapter 9.

In the hypothesis that there are 3 responses present in each of the 4 ranges of quantitative data, I will report a total of 12 responses for each shared experience. In this section of Chapter 10, I anticipate that there are only five cases in the indoor phase in which quantitative data corresponding to 5 centimetres or less are present on the slider scales. On the contrary, during all outdoor experiences as compared to the indoor phase, 19 out of 21 participants reported responses in the slider scales with values between *7 and 10 centimetres*. The 4 bands in the graphs in Chapter 9, which contain the quantitative data, correspond to the bands between $0 > 2.5$ centimetres, $2.5 > 5$ centimetres, $5 > 7.5$ centimetres, $7.5 > 10$ centimetres. I selected the responses by observing the quantitative data of the slider scale for each shared experience, beginning with the responses with the lowest numerical data. I conclude by selecting as the last response, the one with the highest numerical data value. In the first shared experience, the lowest quantitative data corresponds to 3.6 centimetres, the highest value corresponds to 9 centimetres.

More specifically regarding the qualitative research of common emerging themes, I was looking for phrases, comments, and expressions used by the participants related to the three basic questions of the questionnaires administered to the students. It was possible to discern common emergent themes present in all seven experiences, however because of the different contexts (indoor/outdoor) and in particular the three different outdoor places, there are emergent themes strictly related to the specific experiences accomplished by the students.

First shared experience

In this first shared experience, the research project was presented to the participants (there had already been an earlier, informal phase to request participants' feedback on the project, but which I felt was too brief). Their impressions of possible experiences we could share were collected. I took note of their wishes, requests and preferences regarding the experiences we would then build together. The students, myself and the art teacher were present.

This phase turned out to be fundamental in shaping the experiences that would subsequently follow. Participants were shown some adventure materials (photos/videos) handed over by the adventurers, in order to identify what kind of adventure they would like to discuss with the adventurers. I report below the responses from the participants' questionnaires, beginning with the lowest value on the slider scale.

Participants' responses

#diva_09 (3.6 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'I would like to participate in the shared experiences with the adventurers, but I want to wait and see what happens. Maybe *I could change some of my habits towards more sustainable behaviour*, because if we don't change the way we behave, we will end up with a dirtier world. But I want to wait if we will experience the adventurer or not'.

#albero_9 (4.2 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that 'The intervention of an adventurer would encourage me to go on new adventures by telling me about his experiences, explaining environmental problems and telling me about his daily gestures. *He would give me a good example to follow* and it would be more interesting

to go on an adventure in nature, but first I want to see what he is like. *If I had a good example from the adventurer, I would be more committed to eco-friendly gestures and actions in order not to pollute. But I don't know if I will have this experience*'.

#peppapig# (5.4 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'The project that is proposed to us, with the presence of adventurers, I think is a very interesting opportunity and could push me towards good learning. I really like the contents of this project, I find it interesting. After the first shared experiences, *I might change something in my daily actions* because if we all changed our habits our future life would benefit and our health would be better'.

#bellina_09 (6.1 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that '*I think that the intervention of an adventurer can stimulate me to do something adventurous* with both interest and enjoyment and I hope that a passion for adventure will be born in me and maybe *I will care more about nature*. I think I could change my habits towards a more sustainable way of doing things, maybe even thanks to the adventures I'll be doing thanks to this project. I could change for the better, but also for the worse!'

#lalli (6.5 centimetres on the slider scale) states that '*I believe that the story of a person's adventure can stimulate me a lot to make new outdoor experiences*'. I hope to do this project because I would like to listen to the adventures of the adventurers. I think I could change something in my behaviour because nature must be respected and you can always improve: if we continue like this the planet will be destroyed and there is no planet B, so if we destroy this... it's over!'

#WLF (8.4 centimetres on the slider scale) claims that 'The presence of an adventure expert is an idea that I like, I think that this type of experience could make us grow and then I would like to meet the adventurers and have the adventurous

experiences. *After an adventurous experience, perhaps I could act in a more sustainable and nature-friendly manner*'.

WR.00 (8.8 centimetres on the slider scale) 'I think that the presence of an expert would be a great boost to the adventure and I hope to become more and more passionate about this project and do it! After all, I love adventures! I think I can improve my behaviour towards acting more sustainably thanks to the new experiences, because I want to contribute to a world that is a little bit cleaner and with less gas emissions. *I believe that change is possible on my side*'.

#bloomesplosiva_09 (9 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'The presence of an adventurer would make me very happy, listen to adventures or experiences of this kind and then imagine them!! The stories of an adventurer will certainly arouse in me the desire to have these experiences but they should also be sustainable, so as to help the environment too. *I personally think that an experience that is also sustainable can change your life, your way of thinking and your daily habits forever*. I hope we will start having this kind of experience soon because I think it is necessary to enrich our cultural background and to grow up'.

Inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses

The inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses identified some recurring primary themes, expressed by the majority of the participants. The emerging themes take into account the indoor environment, partly static and the pandemic context.

Both #diva_09 and #albero_9 (2.5>5.0 centimetres on the slider scale) express interest in the content of the proposed possible experiences. A theme emerges of scepticism that adventurous experiences will be undertaken. Another emerging theme

is inherent in the fact that if adventurous experiences were to be carried out and positive examples were given by the adventurers, this could help to create in them a greater desire for closeness to nature and a greater respect for nature in general. The last theme common to both participants was that future shared experiences could foster a change in their behaviour towards a more sustainable attitude and be more engaged in eco-friendly gestures. #diva_09 states, even though it reports general scepticism about the project, that *I could change some of my habits towards more sustainable behaviour.*

#Albero_9 states that *If I had a good example from the adventurer, I would engage more in eco-friendly gestures.* #peppapig#, #bellina_09 #lalli from their responses (5.0 > 7.5 centimetres on the slider scale) these common emergent themes arise: participants express curiosity about being able to interact with adventurers in future shared experiences and being able to hear their adventurous stories undertaken. Another common emerging theme is that a direct experience with an adventurer can stimulate them to go on adventures of their own from which they can learn and develop a greater care for the environment. #lalli states that *'I believe that the story of a person's adventure can stimulate me a lot to make new outdoor experiences'*.

#WLF, WR.00 and #bloomesplosiva_09 (7.5 > 10 on the slider scale) from their responses, the following emerging common themes can be deduced. Participants express curiosity to the point of feeling excitement at the idea that they will be able to encounter adventurers. The thought of hearing about their adventures and interacting with them, participants commonly state, may make them want to have more direct experiences in nature. After these experiences, a change in their behaviour towards greater care for nature and the environment is likely to develop. #WLF affirms that *'After an adventurous experience, perhaps I could act in a more sustainable and nature-friendly manner'*. In addition, #bloomesplosiva_09 affirms that *I personally think that an experience that is also sustainable can change your life, your way of thinking and your daily habits forever.*

An inductive analysis of the participants' responses, beginning with the second band of the slider scale up to the last band (7.5>10 centimetres), highlights the fact that all students express curiosity about meeting adventurers and having direct contact with them. The idea of listening to the adventurers' adventures is perceived as a positive experience that generates curiosity on the part of the participants and can generate in them a desire to make their own adventurous experiences.

Often, the recurring theme emerges that if a positive example were to be set by the adventurers, the participants might also change their way of acting towards an attitude of greater care and connection to nature. Furthermore, several students associated the idea that if they had an adventurous experience, they would most likely change their attitude towards caring for the environment and change something of their behaviour towards acting more sustainably. Several participants expressed a degree of scepticism as to whether or not they would have the shared experiences and expressed curiosity about the personality type of the adventurers.

19 out of 21 participants would repeat the shared experience they carried out, as an overall majority of the students placed a mark above 50 millimetres on the slider scale and placed a mark on the word 'Yes' on the questionnaire to express their desire to repeat the experience (e.g. p. 180-181)

Second shared experience

In this second shared experience, the first adventurer was present: Davide Ugolini. The adventurer shared with us some of his accomplished adventures. The first adventure narrated, the *Tor des Géants*, focused on certain themes: the relationship with nature while undertaking an adventure, the friendship with the friend with which one is undertaking an adventure (Davide Ugolini and Stefano Gregoretti) helping each other in difficult moments and the learning one can glean from these adventurous experiences.

The second adventure narrated relates to the Gobi marathon, focusing on the unforeseen events that can occur in these circumstances, the uncertainty that is present in an adventure and the decisions one has to make when unexpected events arise in order to be able to successfully complete the adventure experience. This adventure also dealt with the importance of the theme of friendship as it too featured Davide Ugolini and Stefano Gregoretti ending the adventure together.

Participants' responses

diego_09 (5.0 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'After the experience I shared with Davide, I would like to have an adventurous experience, but one that is also relaxing, such as running on a mountain trail or cycling in a park, or in the mountains. I enjoyed listening to Davide's adventures: now *I would like to have other experiences in his company*'.

#WLF (5.7 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'Davide's adventurous stories have aroused in me a greater desire to start micro-adventures and so I could revolutionise my habits in my own small way. I would like to be like David, he is a

great example: *Davide's tales of extraordinary adventures push me towards nature by respecting it!*

#albero_9 (7.4 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that 'Adventurer today has further increased my interest in an adventurous experience that could be exciting and evocative, *but at the same time environmentally friendly and respectful of the nature around us.* I would look at nature with different eyes and living an adventurous experience immersed in nature would be an unforgettable experience and would help me not to feel fatigue and to think only about feeling good and having fun. *Davide with his adventures could be an example and an adventurous experience would help me respect that place and get closer to it.* This would also help me use the computer and the phone less.

#amopizza (8.1 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that 'Davide's speech inspired me a lot, *I would like to have adventurous experiences in order to get to know nature better,* for this reason I could also do a lot of km (endurance races are underlined). I think an adventurous experience would be a lot of fun in the company of friends. Everything would be better and I could find a stronger bond with nature itself. Moreover, *an adventurous experience would create in me a greater sense of caring for the place of the experience.* If the first time I found the place clean, I would want the place to keep itself clean for the next times, for other experiences'.

#bellalei_71 (8.4 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that 'I found the experiences described by the expert very interesting, a good example to have more experiences in nature, and I consider myself curious and would like to try something similar, but with the right amount of time. *Davide's speech made me understand and see that being in contact with nature is good, something positive.* You can breathe

clean air. I think that an adventurous experience would also make me reflect on my behaviour and the type of relationship I should have with nature.

#bellina_09 (9.5 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'After the experience shared with Davide, I would like to go on adventures, so I could create a respectful and deeper relationship with nature. I would also like to go on difficult adventures because then I could have more fun. The best part part of the adventure is getting to the end, I'd like to do that and I hope the opportunity will arise sooner or later. *Davide's adventures are a good starting point for our own, a real inspiration for adventures: I could make a better connection with nature.* I like nature, but some animals scare me so this project could stimulate me to be more at peace and in tune with animals so I am not afraid of them anymore.

Inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses

The inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses identified some recurring primary themes, expressed by the majority of the participants. The emerging themes take into account the indoor environment, partly static and the pandemic context.

diego_09, #WLF and #albero_9 (5.0>7.5 on the slider scale) some common recurring themes can be noted in their responses. All participants express a common theme related to a desire to repeat a similar experience, and in particular manifest a clear wish to undertake an adventurous experience. The shared experience with the adventurer, sees a common theme from the participants related to the fact that an adventurous experience would lead them to have a closer connection with nature. #WLF states that '*Davide's tales of extraordinary adventures push me towards nature by respecting it!*' #Albero_09, in addition, affirms that '*An adventurous experience could be exciting and evocative, but at the same time environmentally friendly and respectful of the nature around us*'.

#amopizza, #bellalei_71 and #bellina_09 (7.5>10 on the slider scale) reported the following common emerging themes from their responses. Participants expressed that David's adventures are an *inspiration* and a *positive example* that inspires them to start their own adventures as well. The student #amopizza states that '*An adventurous experience would create in me a greater sense of caring for the place of experience*'. #bellalei_71 argues that '*Davide's speech made me understand and see that being in contact with nature is good, something positive, because you can breathe clean air*'. In addition, #bellalei_71 states that '*Davide's speech made me understand and see that being in contact with nature is good, something positive*'.

Having an adventurous experience leads participants to imagine creating a greater connection and respect with nature. In addition, #bellina_09 claims that '*Davide's adventures are a good starting point for our own, a real inspiration for adventures: I could make a better connection with nature*'. Inductive analysis of all participants' responses, commencing from the third band on the slider scale to the last band (5.0>10 centimeters), highlights the emerging theme that all students after the shared experience with the adventurer express a desire to spark their own direct adventurous experiences. Several participants express that an adventurous experience would lead them to create a greater connection with nature and probably a change in them toward being more environmentally conscious.

After the shared experience with the adventurer, several students recognised that having an adventurous experience in nature can lead them to have a greater respect and connection with it. The pictures, video and communication of the adventurer, emerging from the students' responses, made it possible to understand that adventures in nature are not about being superior to nature, but about being one with it and thus becoming more respectful of nature.

21 out of 21 participants would repeat the shared experience they experienced, as all of them placed a mark of more than 50 millimetres on the slider scale and placed a mark on the word 'Yes' on the questionnaire to express their desire to repeat the experience (e.g. pp. 180-181).

Third shared experience

The first adventure narrated was the *Run for Rhino*. This adventure experience is focused on the purpose of raising awareness of the poaching still present in some countries, the importance of protecting some animal species in order to defend their biodiversity, and the relationship with nature while performing the adventurous experience. The second adventurous experience narrated is *Across Me*, focused on the the importance of awareness of the pollution of the Adriatic Sea and the sustainable human activities that can be carried out to preserve our sea. The section that follows reports the transcribed responses from the participants' questionnaires.

Participants' responses

diego_09 (5.1 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that '*Andrea has inspired me to have an adventurous experience*. I would like to do it in the mountains, hills, wherever there is sea and plants. I liked the expert talk because I like all animals (birds, snakes, owls). I care about nature and an *adventurous experience* can help me create a *strong bond* with it. *After seeing Andrea's adventures, I want to have more respect for natural places and preserve them*.

#WLF (5.8 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that 'The expert's speech did not arouse my interest because I am already 'sustainable' (...) with what I do, but after watching the run for rhino, I was very surprised: I liked Andrea's spirit of sacrifice and his spirit of benevolence towards other people and animals. After all, however, I think an *adventurous experience* would help me try to make a *bond with nature*'.

darkshadow_09 (6.4 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that ‘I think I can make more of a connection with nature, although the first part of the shared experience didn't inspire me too much, but hopefully I can change my mind for the better. Andrea's intervention (run for Rhino) inspired me a lot in the second part, because it reminded me that when I was a child I had a dream, that is *to discover* and see *new* (unknown) *territories* and *animals* and now I hope to realise it’.

#ochako!<3 (7.7 centimetres on the slider scale) claims that ‘Thanks to Andrea's stories I think this kind of adventurous experiences can make me feel emotions and sensations that I can't describe, so I would like to do them both alone and with my friends. Andrea's experiences can help me to recreate a stronger bond with nature, I think that thanks to these experiences we can have a stronger *spiritual bond with nature* and this is wonderful, because feeling one with nature makes us feel better with ourselves and consequently with others. The adventures of Pelò are an *example* to follow. I think that without direct experience one cannot create a sense of care and affection for the place where the experience happens’.

sami_lamella_08 (8.8 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘Andrea's speech created in me a lot of desire and interest about this experience and also a lot of courage, self-esteem and confidence: I would like now running everywhere! Andrea's adventures are an *example* for my own. Andrea for me is a *source of inspiration*, then in nature you can find many surprises and have many experiences. Perhaps an adventurous experience may create in me a greater attention to nature, but I would certainly have a lot of fun in it!’

#bellina_09 (9.2 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that ‘*Thanks to Andrea's adventurous stories, I think I can create a better relationship with nature and at the same time have a lot of fun*, also because I would love to run in nature, but

I would like to run in Africa with Andrea!! *Having seen everything Andrea has done, I would find a more intense connection with nature.*

Inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses.

The inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses identified some recurring primary themes, expressed by the majority of the participants. The emerging themes take into account the indoor environment, partly static and the pandemic context. Diego_09, #WLF and darkshadow_09 responses (from the 5.0>7.5 range of the slider scale), underline the presence of some recurring themes that are analysed in the following lines. The adventures of Pelò, emerges from the participants' responses, are *a source of inspiration to undertake new adventures*. These create a greater desire to experience new adventures and thus to encounter unknown animals and at the same time have moments of joy and fun.

Diego_09 affirms that *I care about nature and an adventurous experience can help me create a strong bond with it*. Diego continues by stating *Andrea has inspired me to have an adventurous experience*. In addition, Darkshadow_09 affirms that *The adventures of Andrea, reminded me that when I was a child I had a dream, that is to discover and see new territories and animals and now I hope to realise it*. In the range between 7.5 and 10 centimetres, #ochako!<3 and Sami_Lamella express a common emerging theme, they emphasise that the adventures of Pelò are *an example to follow* because they can help to create a *stronger bond with nature* and thus care for it.

At the same time, #bellina_09 also expresses a theme common to the two responses earlier by the other participants; #bellina_09 asserts that *'Having seen everything Andrea has done, I would find a more intense connection with nature'*. From the participants' responses, common themes emerge that are present in the two connected slider scales (5.0>10 centimetres). Andrea's adventures are perceived as a clear *source of inspiration* for the pupils to also originate their own adventures,

possibly by encountering animals. In doing so, claim the students, they could create a closer connection with the nature. The majority of the participants expressed a greater interest in the *Run for Rhino* adventure experience, compared to *Accross Me* which focused on the issues of sustainability and pollution of the Adriatic Sea.

I deduced from the responses that this was due to the different nature of the two adventure experiences; in the first adventure, Pelò often talked about and showed pictures of the animals of Africa encountered during the adventurous experience. In *Accross Me*, comments and photo-videos often featured elements related to images of the adventurer crossing the Adriatic Sea. The possibility of having an adventurous experience with the presence of animals emerges as a recurring theme in the responses transcribed from the questionnaires. The theme of a more sustainable attitude or a change of self towards more sustainable action emerges at times in a way that is not always emphasised. Several, after the shared experience, would like to have an experience that allows them to run in a natural environment and enjoy nature.

21 out of 21 participants would repeat the shared experience they experienced, as all of them placed a mark of more than 50 millimetres on the slider scale and placed a mark on the word 'Yes' on the questionnaire to express their desire to repeat the experience (e.g. pp. 180-181)

Fourth shared experience

The fourth shared experience was characterised by the search for places where, in the second outdoor phase that would follow, place-based experiential activities would take place in the spring. The undersigned, together with the participants, viewed through some photos I had taken, some places near the participants' school characterised by sustainable human activities, or by human activities both sustainable and in defence of biodiversity. Adventurer Davide Ugolini was present, who conducted some reciprocal interviews with the students to explore which outdoor locations they would prefer to carry out the outdoor experiential activities. The locations where the adventurer Di Giorgio organises swim-run (aquatic-runs) races between the Adriatic Sea and the pine forest of Milano Marittina were also shown. The following section contains the students' answers.

Participants' responses

darkshadow_09 (5.4 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that 'Thanks to the photo-video material, I believe I can rediscover a greater desire to undertake an adventurous experience and a greater connection with nature and some places close to my home. *I have discovered that with a bicycle and a beautiful landscape*, everyone can help the planet to act in a more sustainable way. I think that an adventurous experience can create in me a *greater care* for a *specific place*, because it is terrible to imagine that in a few years we will ruin the landscapes near us if we don't change something

#bellalei71 (5.7 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'The possible experiences proposed by the expert did not convince me completely: only half of the

ones they proposed I would like to do. I don't want to try the sport, but I like to see the athletes when they compete. From now, I like this phase of the lesson better, I mean, the places seen are beautiful and I could do some adventurous activities, but I prefer to see the adventurers do the adventures.

#amopizza# (6.7 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that 'The experience shared with the expert made me very curious about the swim-run race, although I am not convinced I want to try it. I found the race locations lovely (the pine forest of Mi-Ma) and I would love *to explore them by bike!* An *adventurous experience* like the ones proposed by the expert can create a *stronger connection with nature* in me, because being outdoors would be good for me. An *adventurous experience* would help me to take *better care of nature*, also because I care about respecting the environment: every time I can, I recycle materials.

#bestia33 (9.2 centimetres on the slider scale) claims that 'Werther's words, *videos and photos inspire me to do more adventure and sports experiences*. The important thing is *to have these experiences* in breathtaking places like the ones I saw today and *have a lot of fun!* *By doing this adventurous experience, I could create a greater connection with nature but at the same time enjoy the adventure experience!* The *expert inspires me to have new adventurous experiences*, because we have been locked in the house for a year and a half because of the Covid and I personally have a craving to get out and spend more time in nature and much less time on devices, although it will be a bit difficult.

#bellina_09 (9.9 centimetres on the slider scale) states that 'Thanks to the experience I shared with Werther and Davide, I would like to try swim-run because it would be a new and unusual experience, especially because the locations are beautiful! (Pineta Milano-Marittima). The expert's *photos and videos* created in me

the desire to have *more adventurous experiences in nature* and I am sure that by doing so, *I would respect nature more. I only hope to have these experiences because I could have so much fun with my friends! An adventurous experience can create in me more affection for nature* than the place of the experience, because when you are in nature, you realise that *nature is not something else, but part of our lives*. When you are in nature everything is more beautiful, it smells better and you can ruin nature if you throw a paper on the ground.

#bloomesplosiva_09 (10 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘The experience shared with Werther intrigued me a lot because seeing the athletes running in the pine forest made me want to try running and swimming (swim-run or aquatic-run). The comments, *photos and video* from the expert *are useful* because it makes me think that *being immersed in nature makes you feel freer and happier*, also because we have been in isolation for a long time because of the covid and we need some light-heartedness and experience the outdoors: an *adventurous experience* can help me to have *more respect* for where we are’.

Inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses

The inductive analysis of the questionnaire responses identified some recurring primary themes, expressed by the majority of the participants. The emerging themes take into account the indoor environment, partly static and the pandemic context.

Darkshadow_09, #bellalei71 and #amopizza# (analysis on the responses given on the slider scale from 5.0>7.5 centimetres) from their responses, the following recurring themes can be retrieved. Darkshadow_09 states that *I think that an adventurous experience can create in me a greater care for a certain place*. In addition, the student reveals a certain sensitivity towards sustainability issues. Darkshadow_09 states that *I have discovered that with a bicycle and a beautiful*

landscape, everyone can help the planet to act in a more sustainable way. #bellalei71 initially expresses scepticism about the locations of possible experiential activities to be undertaken, stating that he would not like to do sport but prefers to contemplate the places. #amopizza# expresses a strong interest in the locations of swim-run races: *'I would love to explore them by bike,* affirms the student. Furthermore, *an adventurous experience like the ones proposed by the expert can create a stronger connection with nature'*, states #amopizza#.

#bestia33, #bellina_09 and #bloomesplosiva_09 (responses from the slider scales between 7.5>10 centimetres) through their responses, it is possible to note some common themes emerging. In particular, *students affirm that an adventurous experience would lead them to have more respect and care for nature and the places of experiential activities.* The material of photos and videos shown of places near their school, was considered to be useful in forming an idea about the place to choose and the possible experiential activities to carry out. #bestia33 states that *'Videos and photos inspire me to do more adventure and sports experiences'*. In addition, the same student states that by doing this adventurous experience, *'I could create a greater connection with nature'*. Instead, #bellina_09, affirms that *'The expert's photos and videos created in me the desire to have more adventurous experiences in nature and I am sure that by doing so, I would respect nature more'*.

Further, #bellina_09 states, *'An adventurous experience can create in me more affection for nature than the place of the experience'*. In addition the student claims that *'When you are in nature, you realise that nature is not something else, but part of our lives'*. #bloomesplosiva_09 argue that *'An adventurous experience can help me to have more respect for where we are'*. As a first comment, #bloomesplosiva_09 states that *'Seeing the athletes running in the pine forest made me want to try running and swimming'*. After observing some photos and videos of the swim-run races that took place in Milano-Marittina organised by the adventurer Pelò, these attracted the attention of participants who expressed their desire to try this sport in the pine forest. The desire to want to run and swim in nature is a recurring theme present in several responses to this final indoor shared experience. An analysis taking into account the

bands on the slider scale between 5.0 and 10 centimetres, reveal some common themes emerging.

The photo-video material intrigued several participants, both about the places and the possible experiential activities that could be carried out in these places. In addition, an emerging theme can be deduced from the responses of 17 out of 21 students; they state that an adventurous experience would help them develop a greater care and respect for both the place where the experience would take place and for nature in general. Several students also associate the idea that if they had an adventurous experience, it would lead them to have moments of fun and joy.

Several students expressed a desire to try swim-run in particular because they were attracted by the beauty of the Milano Marittima pine forest location. The experiential activities that will be undertaken in the outdoor phase have not been defined, however the discovery of unfamiliar places, but very close to home, helped to arouse the students' curiosity and bring them closer to the outdoor activities that will be undertaken in the second phase of this research project.

Several participants stated that an activity, whether adventurous or sporty, would lead them to a greater care for and connection with nature. The theme of more sustainable action emerges in spots, however from both the questionnaires and the field notes I transcribed, it emerges that cycling can be an excellent means of moving around and contributing to more sustainable action. 21 out of 21 participants would repeat the shared experience they experienced, as all of them placed a mark of more than 50 millimetres on the slider scale and placed a mark on the word 'Yes' on the questionnaire to express their desire to repeat the experience (e.g. pp. 180-181)

Place searching methodology for place-based experiential activities

In this section of the current chapter, I report the methods that were adopted to identify the places for the experiential activities that would follow in the outdoor phase of this doctoral project. The search for outdoor places began during the last indoor shared experience.

At this stage, several photos were viewed of a number of locations near the focus group's school that could potentially host the experiential activities. Through the participants' votes after viewing the photos of some places, I took note of the participants' wishes and desires, who declared a strong interest in having a direct experience at a farm near Santarcangelo that breeds native animals that have been present in the area for centuries, and in addition, the participants showed a considerable interest in visiting the Cervia saltpans by reaching them using canoes. Nevertheless, the identification of the places for place-based experiential activities saw the use of two other methods: the reciprocal interview between Davide Ugolini and some students, and the collaboration with the art teacher Francesca.

In the first case, I report three reciprocal interviews that took place between Davide and the students. In the second case, the identification of the places with the collaboration of the art teacher took 4 months as the students drew the place where they would wish to carry out the outdoor activity and in particular which experiential activity to carry out in that particular place. 20 out of 21 students handed a drawing to me representing themselves in a specific place while performing some outdoor activities, or simply observing the landscape of the desired place.

Reciprocal interviews between the adventurer Davide Ugolini and 3 focus group students

In this section of Chapter 10, three interviews that took place between the adventurer Davide Ugolini and three students are reported. There are 10 interviews in total: all of them were based on a mutual exchange of information about places already known to both of them, and desired locations for the outdoor experiences that would follow in the spring period. All interviews are reported in narrative form, the first is between #ochako!<3 and the adventurer.

When asked by Davide what places in the Rimini area he knows, the student answers with a very wide and deep knowledge of locations. #ochako!<3 claims to have visited Fiorenzuola di Focara, on the Panoramica road towards Pesaro. The place is imprinted in her memories because in that area the sea water is more transparent and crystalline than in Rimini, so it has become a favourite place for swimming and being in contact with nature.

#ochako!<3 says that the beauty of the place is due to the morphological diversity of the place, which has sandy beaches, a cliff and a hill in about 1 square kilometre. In addition, she states that she is only partly familiar with the Casentino forests, which are at least an hour's drive from Rimini. #ochako!<3 states that she would like to do place-based experiential

activities in these forests because they are real forests that offer very different conditions and circumstances. Pointing out that for reasons of 'logistics' it would be difficult to reach such places, then through some targeted questions, Davide and the student come to the conclusion that the Marecchia valley also offers many opportunities.

The participant affirms that a bike ride on the Marecchia cycle path could be a good starting point for an adventure. The boundaries of activities remain blurred because one does not want to plan exactly what one is going to do. Davide and #ochako!<3 argue that decisions on exactly what to do and what to connect will only be made when and if an experience in the Marecchia Valley will take place.



Adventurer and #ochako!<3 during the mutual interview

The second reported interview is between the adventurer and Sami_Lamella_08.

Davide starts the dialogue by asking if he knows the Marecchia Valley area and in particular the cycle path, and the student says he knows it very well. He states that he is used to going there from time to time with his bicycle and his father, or with friends.

He also states that he would very much like the outdoor phase to take place there. The student states that he already has several memories of particular experiences that happened to him there with his friends and would therefore like to repeat something similar with the class. The student, in addition after being prompted by the adventurer, states that he would also like to have an experience in San Leo (the student in fact drew as a vignette where to take the experiential phase, in San Leo). What he likes most about that place is the peace, the quiet, the absence of traffic and noise.

Sami affirms that the clean air is a specific detail that he remembers being typical of that place: after all, San Leo is already almost like a mountain, just before Monte Carpegna. At this point I also intervene in the interview and ask him which means of transport he would like to use, and the bicycle seems to be the best option, even if in the dialogue all three of us try to understand what the best type of bike for that terrain might be: the mountain bike seems to be the best choice. At this point in the interview, a funny misunderstanding occurs between

the two (Sami and Davide) as the student asks Davide about the swim-run....confusing him with Pelò, who had already been there the previous time.

A small 'oversight' that generates a good laugh from all present. At the end of the mutual interview, the student says that any direct experience in nature would be great, as long as it is done in the spring; the most important thing is to have experiences, claims the student, the location matters relatively. 'If I had so much fun with Davide inside four walls, I don't know what I would feel about having an outdoor experience, maybe with Davide', asserts the student.



Adventurer and Sami_Lamella_08 during the mutual interview

The second mutual interview reported is between the adventurer and WR.00.

The last reciprocal interview begins with some questions from Davide concerning which places the student already knows and what kind of experiences she has had at these. WR.00 states that she knows some iconic places on the Marecchia cycle path, such as the sanctuary of the Madonna di Saiano.

The place, the student reports, is dear to her because with her parents have visited it several times and it is possible to go trekking, mountain biking and if one wishes one can go towards the Marecchia river, or trek towards Montebello. WR.00 states that she would like to do the outdoor phase in this place because she already knows it and because it could be a direct experience in contact with nature that would be a lot of fun, if done with her classmates.

In addition, she states that she was very intrigued by the images and videos proposed during the last indoor phase. The student tells us that both the pine forest of Milano Marittima and the salt pans of Cervia are places where she would like to have a direct experience. In addition, she states that she would not have imagined that an indoor experience could make her feel positive feelings just from a dialogue with an adventurer, so she wonders what she might feel if she did the

outdoor phase? At the end of the interview, she does not clearly express which experiential activities he would like to do, however, being there with her classmates would be extremely relevant.

The student also states that he would like Davide to be there because he was impressed by his adventures and would like to imitate him in some way. The reciprocal interview ends like this, with a wish that we could see each other in one of the places mentioned above and realise any experience.



Adventurer and WR.00 during the mutual interview

Analysis of the reciprocal interviews accomplished

The use of reciprocal interviews between adventurer and student proved interesting and fruitful in engaging the student in selecting the locations of place-based experiential activities that would follow in the outdoor phase. This activity had not been planned, however during the last indoor shared experience, some students expressed a desire to talk to Davide.

This gave rise to the mutual student-adventurer interviews that involved 10 students. During the reciprocal interview phase, it is possible to affirm that a friendship and positive and emotional feeling was created between the protagonists of this activity, which involved only those students who requested to do the interviews. Students being volunteers, reported that this way of choosing outdoor locations for direct experiences made them feel at the centre of this OAE project, because they could contribute to the decision-making process and name their favourite places (up to 4 favourite locations) where place-based experiential activities would take place. The reciprocal interviews, although born by chance, turned out to be crucial for the second outdoor phase. Several students had expressed their scepticism as to whether or not it would be appropriate to continue in such an unpredictable context (the pandemic); the emotional responses from the students after the interviews, in contrast, proved positive and caused their doubts to disappear, creating instead a considerable expectation of the activities to be undertaken outdoors.

In all the reciprocal interviews concluded, the Marecchia Valley area was frequently mentioned (7 out of 10 interviews), as well as San Leo (9 out of 10) and the Cervia salt pans (6 out of 10 participants), as can be deduced from the drawings sketched by the students during this research project.

Focus group drawings: places and activities imagined before the outdoor phase

#Albero_09 (1) Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings



#Albero_09 reports in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, intent on observing the landscape.

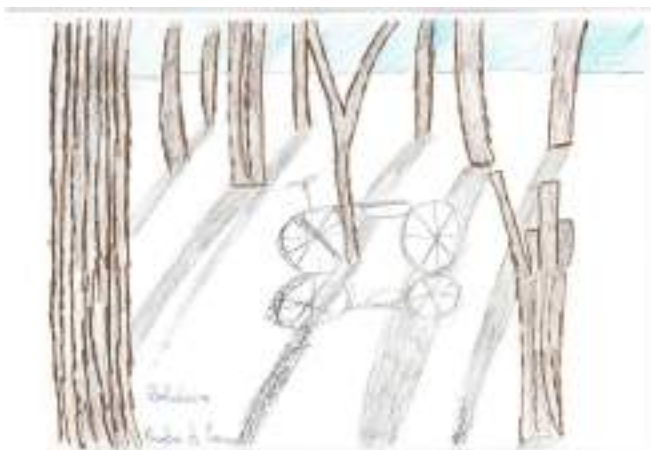
Amopizza (2)



Amopizza reports in its drawing the desire to be at the Cervia Pinewood and explore it using a bicycle.

Bellalei_71 (3)

Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



Bellalei_71 reports in its drawing the Cervia pine forest with its typical trees, intent on observing the place.

#Bellina_09 (4)



#Bellina_09 reports in its drawing Marina di Ravenna, intent on observing the place.

Bestia_33 (5)

Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



Bestia_33 indicates in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, with the intention of climbing a rock face in San Leo.

Bettigawer_1999-2000 (6)



Bettigawer_1999-2000 reports in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, intent on observing the landscape.

#BloomEsplosiva_09 (7) Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



#BloomEsplosiva_09 indicates in its drawing the desire to be by the canal connecting the Cervia salt pans to the Adriatic Sea, using a canoe to reach the 'Camillone' slow food presidio.

Darkshadow (8)



Darkshadow reports in its drawing the desire to be at the fortress of San Leo and to explore the area with a bicycle.

Diego_09 (9)

Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



Diego_09 indicates in its drawing an unspecified canal port, although it can be traced back to the one connecting the Cervia salt pans with the Adriatic Sea. The desire to observe the place is inferred.

#Diva_09 (10): missing drawing

GG_19 (11)



GG_19 reports in its drawing the salt tower at the port of Cervia, a compulsory stop before researching the salt pans 2 km away.

#Lalli<3 (12) Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



#Lalli<3 indicates in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, intent on observing the landscape.

Love_09 (13)



Love_09 reports in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, intent on observing the landscape.

#ochako!<3 (14)

Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



#ochako!<3 indicates in its drawing the Cervia salt pans, intent on observing the place.

#Pancetta# (15)



#Pancetta# reports in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, intent on observing the landscape.

#Peppapig# (16)

Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



#Peppapig# indicates in its drawing the major park of Santarcangelo, without indicating a particular experiential activity to be carried out.

#Sami_Lamella_08 (17)



#Sami_Lamella_08 reports in its drawing imagining himself at the fortress of San Leo, intent on observing the landscape.

#Tsuyu!<3 (18) Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



#Tsuyu!<3 indicates in its drawing the promontory of Gabicce Monte, in the San Bartolo Natural Park a few kilometres from Rimini, while exploring the area with a bicycle

#VR46 (19)



#VR46 reports in its drawing imagining himself in Rivabella, an area of Rimini near the 'E. Fermi' middle school, watching the sun.

#WLF (20)

Analysis and interpretation of focus group drawings.



#WLF indicates in its drawing imagining himself in the Cervia salt pans, observing the animal that symbolises those areas: the flamingo. It is deduced that the student would like to observe the salt pans and the animals there.

#WR.00 (21)



#WR.00 reports in its drawing imagining itself in the Marecchia valley, without indicating a specific place in the valley, but with the clear intention of taking a walk and observing the landscape. Note the various castles in the drawing, typical of the Marecchia valley (Verucchio, San Leo, Torriana etc.).

Analysis and interpretation of focus group students' drawings

The students' drawings drew at school, saw the emergence of recurring themes. Teacher Francesca asked the students to draw the place where they would like to do the experiential activity in the outdoor phase and the type of experiential activity they would like to engage in there (e.g. cycling, hiking, canoeing etc.).

20 out of 21 participants drew the desired place, in those cases where the students did not represent themselves in the drawing, this meant that they wished to be in that place and contemplate it, without having to carry out a specific activity. The castle of San Leo, one can deduce from the drawings, is the most recurring emerging place, having been drawn by 8 students. This was followed by the salt pans of Cervia with 4 students having represented places related to the local salt pans, and finally two students drew the pine forest of Milano Marittima. It is possible to note the fact that in several drawings, the students did not place themselves within the vignette. This signifies a desire to be there in that place, but not necessarily to engage in a sporting or adventurous activity. In these cases, I infer that the students would like to observe and contemplate the landscape.

This theme also emerged from the narratives of the adventurers, who frequently stated that during their moments of rest after the efforts of an adventure, observing the nature of *'The places had the power to recharge me from my fatigues'* (quoted by Davide and Andrea, interviews 2022). Through direct conversations with the students, via the field notes, several students affirmed such thinking: sometimes inspired by the adventurers, sometimes by their personal emotions because they had already experienced that place. Sami_Lamella, both in his drawing and in the interview with Davide, states that *'The iconic view of the castle of San Leo alone has the capacity to bring a feeling of peace and well-being'*.

In addition, Sami states in the interview that *'The absence of traffic in San Leo, the clean air and the fantastic view make me feel better: if I have fears or anxieties, these disappear if I am in San Leo'*. Also in WLF's drawing, it can be observed that

the student did not represent himself, demonstrating only that he wanted to observe the place. WLF, specifically, drew the symbolic animal of the Cervia salt pans: the flamingo. From his drawing, it can be deduced that WLF would like to observe the flamingo as it feeds in the salt pans, eating the *Artemia Salina* that gives them their typical pink colour. #ochako!<3 seems to emphasise the beauty of the Cervia salt pans, without the need for a specific activity.

Observing the place and contemplating the salt-pans, one deduces from the student's drawing, seems to be a fulfilling and satisfying activity in itself in order to understand the different meanings that the place itself can take on depending on who and what he/she wants to observe and thus draw as a reflection, from observing that place. In the drawing by Bloomesposiva_09, contrary to the two previous drawings, the idea of an adventurous and sporty experience prevails, with the aim of reaching the Slow-Food salt pans in Cervia using a canoe. Bloomesposiva_09 represents herself in the drawing while, using a canoe, she attempts to reach the salt-pans together with a classmate. In this case, it is possible to deduce the desire to have an adventurous experience in the company of a classmate and at the same time perform some sporting activity. The same as bloomesplosiva_09, #Tsuyu!<3 depicts herself in the drawing intent on exploring the promontory of Gabicce Monte during sunset (or a sunrise: it was not specified) using a bicycle.

The emerging theme of the desire expressed by #Tsuyu!<3 to have an experience that is at the same time sporty, adventurous but also contemplative of the place as one notices the end of the day with the sunset. The drawings reported by the students highlight how they were placed at the centre of this OAE project as they took part in the decisions regarding the desired locations for the outdoor activities of the second phase of this research project. In addition, the students demonstrated that a variety of languages can be used to express desires related to the places one would like to explore and where to perform a place-based experiential activity (Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016; Wattchow, & Brown, 2011).

Relationships

Building relationships between students and adventurers, as well as myself, is the dominant theme that emerged in the first indoor phase. During the shared experiences with the adventurers, relationships were built more between the adventurers and the students, rather than only between the students.

This was due to the particular context of the experience (non-dynamic and indoor), which fostered the dynamics of mutual familiarity between participants and adventurers. X factor that favoured the emergence of these positive and engaging relationships was the type of relationship that was created between adventurer and student in which the students actively participated in these experiences through direct questions, asking for explanations on the material that was viewed (photos-videos), asking with curiosity about how the adventurers managed to cope with the unforeseen events that occurred during the adventures. Students also created a friendship with the adventurers by asking for advice on micro-adventures to undertake in the immediate vicinity of the school or their dwellings. In addition, in particular, the reciprocal interviews fostered the bond of friendship between the adventurer Davide Ugolini and the interviewees. Several participants, after the interviews, expressed a desire to complete an adventure in the company of one of the two adventurers. Diego_09, states in his responses transcribed from the questionnaire, *'I enjoyed listening to Davide's adventures: now I would like to have more experiences in his company'* (p. 247 f.6).

At the same time, a feeling of admiration and a desire to emulate the adventurers' gestures, is shared by some of the participants' responses. #Bellina_09 affirms that *'I would like to run in Africa with Andrea! Having seen everything Andrea has done, I would find a more intense connection with nature'*. The specific desire of #Bellina_09 to run in Africa has become a recurring theme expressed by several students. This desire can be deduced to have arisen from observing the Run for Rhino adventure accomplished by Pelò. This adventure, narrated in presence during this research project, inspired several students who, after the shared experience,

formulated the desire to do an experiential activity in a place where there were also animals and a chance to encounter and observe them. In addition, Sami_Lamella_08 states that *'Andrea for me is a source of inspiration'* (p. 248 f.12).

This phrase, reported by several students although expressed in different ways, became a recurring theme. After the two experiences shared with the adventurers, all the participants expressed the same concept: the adventures listened to, observed and shared, on which several questions were asked, had the function of creating a friendly relationship with the adventurers and at the same time the students expressed at various times (through the questionnaires or by listening to them), the fact that *Davide and Andrea were an excellent example of inspiration for thinking about their own adventures* to be carried out in the immediate future or as soon as possible. The video material and photos, in addition, during the last indoor shared experience favoured to create a deeper relationship and even complicity between myself and the students. In fact, Bestia33 states that *'Werther's words, videos and photos inspire me to do more adventure and sports experiences. The important thing is to have these experiences in breathtaking places like the ones I saw today and have a lot of fun!'* In the same vein, a recurring theme emerges related to the importance of the material viewed in the last indoor experience, which facilitated the creation of a relationship of trust and mutual esteem between everyone present. Nevertheless, the responses retrieved from darkshadow_09 concerning the last indoor experience highlight the importance of the photo-video material observed, and how this was a cue to create a more heartfelt relationship between all participants. In fact, darkshadow_09 states that *'Thanks to the photo-video material, I believe I can rediscover a greater desire to undertake an adventurous experience and a greater connection with nature and with some places close to my home'*.

To conclude this section *'The photos and videos of the experts, Bloomesplosiva_09 asserts, are useful because they make me think that being immersed in nature makes you feel freer and happier, also because we have been in isolation for a long time because of the Covid and we need some light-heartedness and to experience the outdoors'*.

Emotional responses

At this point in the OAE research project, it is fair to affirm that the indoor phase elicited many emotional responses from the students. The most common emotional responses were the joy and happiness of having a new experience, especially because of the presence of the adventurers, the sensation of being the first to experience something new, different, never before attempted in a school.

The students were aware that the experiences they were about to have were not an end in itself, but were part of a research project and therefore other students, after them if the findings were positive, would be able to experience these new ways of co-constructing new knowledge together with adventurers and sustainability and biodiversity experts. This awareness fostered a sense of pride and also of feeling like the forerunners of something new, of something different, encouraging the emergence of positive emotional responses demonstrated by the fact that they were all volunteers and that it was they who decided which experiences to undertake and when to end with the last experience in Cervia. Moreover, because the experience was considered unexpected as it occurred in a pandemic context, the various direct experiences fostered the development of a perception of positive well-being and a sense of belonging to a group that would later have memorable experiences in the outdoor phase. In doing so, the shared experiences among all participants brought out positive emotional memories, particularly among the students, adventurers, and myself.

Whilst, the thought of the students expressed through the questionnaires and direct conversations I had with them, of continuing this shared experience at a later stage in places dear to themselves and chosen by them, fostered the emergence of a positive and sometimes irrepressible expectation for what might then happen in the outdoor experiential activities, especially if together with the adventurers. The sense of attachment and affection towards the adventurers was manifested during the shared experiences, particularly at the end of the experiences, when several students expressed a desire to continue the outdoor phase in the company of both (field note).

It is possible to state in this section of the thesis that the reciprocal interviews, between adventurer and student, nurtured the hope that this project could be continued even though we were all aware of the difficulties due to the pandemic context. Some students had expressed scepticism regarding the outdoor phase; the interviews between Davide and most of the students dispelled these perplexities.

What emerged from the interviews instead was the idea that if they had felt positive emotions in an indoor context, the emotional responses might have been even more positive in an outdoor context due to the naturalistic locations, the possibility of encountering animals and greater freedom due to the outdoors. In addition, the unpredictability and variety of activities that would later be decided by the students, inherent to the outdoor phase, influenced the emotional responses expressed by the pupils. Along the way, students increasingly realised that their opinions, desires and expectations would be heard and were part of the decision-making process of the experiences that would follow. This awareness emerged little by little and fostered the arising of positive emotional responses, which generated lasting memories. Awareness of the importance of their desires emerged particularly when near spring they expressed a desire to begin their first outdoor experience at Mutonia, a possibility that had not been discussed during the indoor phase. When the students realised that this would be possible, their emotional responses were characterised by a mix of disbelief, happiness and looking forward to starting at the place called Mutonia, where human activities are sustainable.

The emotional responses, however, were not always positive and this was due to the uncertainty generated by the pandemic. The fact that it was not clear that there would be a second outdoor phase led the students in some cases to express their perplexity and fears. Nevertheless, the fact that in the spring the high temperatures led to a drastic decrease in Covid contagion and the introduction of less stringent regulations (e.g. not having to wear masks, *if outdoors*), this new state of events fostered the resurgence of positive emotional responses related to the hope that the project could be successfully concluded with the outdoor phase.

Photos from the indoor phase with the adventurers and the undersigned



(F1) First shared experience: students take chairs looking at their folders



(F2) The first adventurer introduces himself to the students: the shared experience with Davide Ugolini begins



(F3) The adventurer and myself introduce the first adventure: Gobi desert marathon



(F4) Intrigued students ask the adventurer for questions and information



(F5) some students queue up for a personalised sign. End of the shared experience with the adventurer



(F6) Diego_09 can't wait for a photo with the adventurer: he's the first



(F7) A moment before the shared experience: safety for social distance



(F8) The second adventurer: Andrea Di Giorgio (Pelò) introduces himself to the students



(F9) Students take note of what intrigues them about the adventures to fill in the questionnaire after the experience



(F10) Second shared experience with the adventurer Peló: mutual introduction between students and adventurer



(F11) Some students fill in the questionnaire concerning the three basic questions of this research project



(F12) students and adventurers see the places of adventures



(F13) last indoor experience: searching for the desired places to continue with the outdoor phase



(F14) A method for selecting a place-based experience: students vote to go to the Cervia saltpans using a canoe



(F15) Students fill in the questionnaire to collect the data on which this research project is based



(F16) Discovering the Romagna territory: a game with students to guess if they know the places in the photos and possibly go there for the outdoor phase



(F17) Questions from students on the use of canoes: how to do it?



(F18) The game to see who recognises certain places through photos continues: where are we here? What could we do? What do you think we could learn from this place via first-hand experience?

Chapter 11: second outdoor phase with the adventurers

Introduction

In this chapter I report and analyse the participants' responses to the second outdoor phase of this research project. The experiences shared concerned the interaction between some sustainability and biodiversity experts and the 21 students who were members of the focus group. In the literature review, I noted that studies and research on place-based experiential activities undertaken only in places where human activities are sustainable and/or in defence of biodiversity have not been extensively researched, particularly within outdoor education. Hill (2013) noted that 'Not all experiences of place afforded by outdoor education work towards the achievement of sustainability-related goals'; having stated this, how could some experiences be constructed and facilitated to more effectively a transformative relationship with the environment? What specific places could facilitate this intent? Could places where human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity facilitate the knowledge of the concepts of sustainable activities and biodiversity for future behaviour that takes more account of the concepts mentioned above? The issues of sustainable human activities and defending biodiversity were recently addressed by Slow-Food founder Carlo Petrini and economist Gaël Giraud (2023) in their book '*Il gusto di cambiare*'. The authors discuss how agro-industry has created a food production system that is unsustainable in terms of both the resulting environmental impact and the inequities created, and they focus their discussion on the one element that will aggravate global warming if unsustainable production continues: the food.

This research project addressed the outdoor phases of place-based experiential activities, searching for specific places characterised by sustainable human activities and or in defence of biodiversity.

-Can the experiences undertaken by students in places where human activities are sustainable and or in defense of biodiversity, inspire them to repeat similar experiences in the future to develop more sustainable acting?

With the aim of researching and deepening the above-mentioned theme, the same questions proposed during the first indoor phase were posed in the questionnaire administered to the 21 participating students in this second phase of this research project.

The same questions, also posed to the participants in the outdoor phase, made it possible to analyse the continuous data on the slider scale pertaining to the outdoor phase, as already outlined in Chapter 9. The example shown previously (p. 194) permits the reader to visualise through a graph, part of the use of the slider scale in this research. The use in the scale slider of centimetres, instead of millimetres as is usual, was a decision due to the space issues inherent in graphs. As already stated in chapter 10, the first question is the main one and constitutes the core of the research project; the other two questions that follow are intended to elaborate on the first question, thus approaching the structure of an open interview:

-Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert - adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?

-Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he discussed can inspire you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it?

-Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?

Criteria for selecting responses

Each student in the focus group, as previously illustrated in Chapter 9, is mentioned in this section using the nickname they chose during their first shared experience. For each shared experience concluded, I report 3 participants' responses by selecting them from the 4 bands of the slider scale graph reproducing the quantitative aggregate data reported in Chapter 9 (Outdoor Experience Graph, p. 189-190).

Assuming there are 3 responses in each of the 4 bands of quantitative data, I will report a total of 12 responses for each concluded experience. I anticipate that there are no responses in the two bands of slider scale data between 0 millimetres and 500 millimetres. In this section of Chapter 11, I advance that in the outdoor phase, the lowest slider scale data corresponds to 580 millimetres (5.8 centimetres). The findings of the slider scales (expressed in centimetres) of the outdoor experiences show that 19 out of 21 participants reported responses on the slider scales with values between 7 and 10 centimetres. The 4 bands in the graphs in Chapter 9 p. 189 contain the quantitative data and correspond to the bands between 0>2.5 centimetres, 2.5>5 centimetres, 5>7.5 centimetres, 7.5>10 centimetres. I selected the responses by observing the quantitative data on the slider scale for each shared experience, starting with the responses with the lowest numeric data. I concluded by selecting the one with the highest numerical value as the last response.

Regarding more specifically the qualitative research of common emerging themes, I searched for sentences, comments and expressions used by the participants in relation to the three basic questions of the questionnaires administered to the students. It was possible to identify common emerging themes present in all seven shared experiences, but due to the different contexts (indoor/outdoor) and in particular in relation to the three different outdoor places of the second phase, common themes emerged in relation to place-based experiential activities closely connected to the peculiarities and specificities of the places.

Fifth shared experience

The first shared outdoor experience took place at Mutonia, near Santarcangelo di Romagna on the Marecchia River cycle path. After reaching the Mutoid camp using sustainable vehicles such as bicycles, Nikki a local artist of Scottish origin took us on a tour of the camp.

The place is characterised by various artistic works made using discarded pieces coming mainly from the scrap dealers of Gambettola. The mutoids' philosophy of life consists of creating the things and tools they need themselves, limiting the purchase of new objects as much as possible with the aim of conveying messages of awareness about the excessive consumption of items. In the camp there is waste material that local people no longer use, but which can be reused to create future artistic works that are often exhibited between Santarcangelo and Rimini. The purpose of the site visit was to inspire the students for the artistic compositions that would follow in the art workshop.

The students were given total freedom to choose the experiential activity they would like to conduct there, such as writing poetry, inventing a new game, drawing the local landscape, or any other. After the camp visit, the students preferred to take part in the art workshop, which involved using bicycle chains, bicycle inner tubes or whatever to create their own artistic works. The use of the waste materials mentioned above was intended to create a common theme between a sustainable vehicle such as the bicycle and the works of art the students would create. At the end of the shared experience, as agreed beforehand, the parents of the students came to visit the camp, in order to avoid having to use the bikes to go back to school in the evening. This help from the parents turned out to be crucial considering the still present pandemic state.

In the following section I report the responses of the participants. There are no responses in the slider scale between values in the range of 0 to 5 centimetres. There are 3 responses with values between 5 and 7.5 centimetres and 3 responses with values between 7.5 and 10 centimetres.

Participants' responses

#bellalei71 (5.7 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘The Mutonia place did not particularly impress me, although Nikki is very nice and only *after the art workshop I was convinced to repeat the experience*. I must say that I understood the message that *we need to take better care of the environment and behave in a more sustainable way*. The experience in Mutonia makes me think that *I should pay more attention to what I throw away and especially whether the object I have in mind should be thrown away, or can I still use it again? I think it is more right to behave differently*’.

#bellina_09 (6 centimetres on the slider scale) states that ‘The place called Mutonia is quite inspiring to me because of the works of art that are made here from discarded materials. The people who live in Mutonia are very nice and Nikki was also very convincing in her (their) work, I mean the workshop with waste materials that we did at the end of the experience. *I had a great time and fun, I want to go back with friends!* The direct experience *I had gives us a better understanding of the problem of recycling materials and perhaps I could be more attentive to environmental issues*’.

tsuyu!<3 (7.5 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘*The experience here leads me to more sustainable behaviour* also because *I really enjoyed the art workshop with Nikki and what fun it is here!* The hands-on experience made me better understand that we can reuse thrown-away objects in a different way and understand environmental problems. *Mutonia is the right place to understand what sustainable behaviour and sustainability issues mean. - It was very nice to create artwork with waste materials, so the abstract concept of sustainability became more understandable to me*’.

#ochako! (8.4 centimetres on the slider scale) claims that *'Mutonia is a place that by its very nature inspires sustainability. Nikki shared with us a very interesting workshop to better understand what sustainable art means, and I would like to experience it again. I think only experiences like that make you understand the concept and what sustainable means. The workshop we did in Mutonia will bring me closer to nature and maybe I will change my actions toward the concept of sustainability'*.

Sami_lamella_08 (9.5 centimetres on the slider scale) states that *'The place is very interesting, I enjoyed the artwork and I better understood the concept of sustainability. The place inspired me to change my behaviour, plus it is 13 minutes from my house and Mutonia is surrounded by nature. Nikki made us realise that sustainability can also be understood through art! I would do the experience again. I had a lot of fun with friends here!! I think in this places you can better understand ecological issues, I think I will change my behaviour a lot. Mutonia is an example and I will try to follow it because I noticed that the Mutonia community is self-sufficient, they don't buy anything'*.

darkshadow_09 (10 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that *'Mutonia inspired me a lot to make personal changes: Nikki and the others taught us how to reuse waste materials. How much fun I had, how much shi..(..) I did! This direct experience here in Mutonia made me realise that things I throw away can have a second life. I want to create something artistic and that is made by me from discarded materials and then I can get back here: Mutonia is close to my home! This experience teaches me to have more balance and respect between myself and the environment'*.

Inductive analysis of questionnaire responses.

The inductive analysis of the responses to the questionnaire identified a number of recurring primary themes, continuously expressed by the majority of participants. Commencing with the 500>750 millimetre slider scale, some emerging themes expressed by the majority of participants can be noted.

#bellalei71 (5.7 centimetres on the slider scale) states that *'The experience in Mutonia makes me think that I should pay more attention to what I throw away and especially whether the object I have in mind should be thrown away or can I still use it?'* Similarly, #bellina_09 also reflects that *'My first-hand experience make me better understand the problem of recycling materials'*. Furthermore, Tsuyu!<3 (7.5 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that *'The direct experience I had made me better understand that we can reuse thrown-away objects in a different way and understand environmental problems'*. In addition, Tsuyu!<3 adds a deeper reflection on the place by stating that *'Mutonia is the right place to understand what sustainable behaviour and sustainability issues mean. - It was very nice to create artwork with waste materials, so that the abstract concept of sustainability became more understandable to me'*. In the last band of the slider scale (7.5>10 centimetres), from participants' responses such as #ochako! (8.4 centimetres), Sami_lamella_08 (9.5 centimetres) and darkshadow_09 (10 centimetres on the slider scale), common themes emerged from the participants' responses in the previous band (5.0>7.5). For instance, #ochako! states that *'Nikki shared with us a very interesting workshop to better understand what sustainable Art means'* and then adds, *'I think only experiences like that make you understand the concept and what sustainable means'*.

In addition, Sami_lamella_08 affirmed that *'I enjoyed the artwork and I better understood the concept of sustainability'*, adding that *'Nikki made us realise that sustainability can also be deepened and more understood through Art!'* The student (Sami_lamella_08) completes his reflection after the experience by stating that *'I think in these places you can better understand ecological issues'*. Darkshadow_09 affirms

that *'This direct experience here in Mutonia made me realise that things I throw away can have a second life. I want to create something artistic and that is made by me from discarded materials'*. All participants expressed the fact that at the same time they had a lot of *fun* and also *through the art workshop, they deepened the concept of sustainable activity*, which previously remained more abstract and nebulous.

Learning the concept of sustainable activity through the art workshop, is an emerging theme also expressed by the other participants not mentioned on these pages. This can also be deduced from the photos on p. 00 in which the focus group took part in which everyone created their own 'discarded' *Art* object. From a certain point of view, the students' responses do not always seem to answer the questionnaire's set of questions directly or precisely, however, this does not invalidate the work on which this research project is based. Several participants stated that after their direct experience in Mutonia, they would like to change their behaviour towards a greater respect for the environment, buy fewer objects, give a value back to used objects thrown away somewhere in order to impact less on the environment. Tsuyu!<3 affirms that *'The experience here leads me to more sustainable behaviour also because I really enjoyed the art workshop. #ochako!*, in addition, claims that *'The workshop we did in Mutonia will bring me closer to nature and maybe I will change my actions toward the concept of sustainability'*. Sami_Lamella_08 argues that *'I think I will change my behaviour a lot. Mutonia is an example and I will try to follow it because I noticed that the Mutonia community is self-sufficient: they don't buy anything'*. To end this theme emerged, of a possible change in one's behaviour towards a greater awareness of the importance of respecting the environment, darkshadow_09 states that *'This experience teaches me to have more balance and respect between myself and the environment'*.

Although these statements do not directly answer the question posed in the questionnaire as to whether the experience that ended in Mutonia is sustainable for the place, it emerges that after the experience in Mutonia, the meaning of sustainable human activity has become a clearer and more understandable concept. 'A sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place', on the other

hand, unites the responses that were given by the majority of participants. A further common theme expressed by all participants placed at various intervals in the questionnaires, states that the experience was fun and allowed them to have a lot of fun at the same time and learn through the experience the concept of sustainable human activities.

This common theme is initially expressed by #bellina_09 as she states that '*I had a great time and fun, I want to go back with friends*'! At the same time, tsuyu!<3 also expresses a similar concept, affirming that '*I really enjoyed the art workshop with Nikki and what fun it is here*'! Sami_lamella_08, states, that '*I had a great time with friends here!!!*' It clearly emerges that the experience was also fun because it was shared with one's classmates: numerous participants express in their responses transcribed from the questionnaires, the desire to repeat this experience with their friends in order to feel the same positive emotions they felt during their direct experience in Mutonia.

21 out of 21 participants would repeat the shared experience they experienced, as all of them placed a mark of more than 500 millimetres on the slider scale and placed a mark on the word 'Yes' on the questionnaire to express their desire to repeat the experience (e.g. pp. 180-181).

Sixth shared experience

This shared experience was characterised at first by the use of the public bus to move as close as possible to the Marecchia cycle path to avoid car traffic. After a walk of a few kilometres, we reached the Marecchia Oasis Park which is located a few hundred metres from Mutonia, but on the other side of the Marecchia River.

The place is a protected area under specific regional laws with the aim of preserving the local native animal species and their biodiversity. In doing so, the purpose of the human activities carried out on this site when that specific park was established was to create a place where the biodiversity of the local fauna, particularly that typical of the Marecchia Valley, could be preserved. The students independently created a route that would allow them to observe the fauna and flora through a number of viewpoints. Several students found some elements on the ground that could be traced back to animals in the area, such as porcupine spines, their burrows, and part of the plumage of some bird species. In the early afternoon, we were joined by Davide Ugolini, whom the students asked questions about his adventures and what direct adventurous practices could have been conducted there, or other places nearby. Some students had brought some freesby, volleyballs and kickballs: the day ended by playing these sports in an atmosphere of conviviality and great fun.

Remarkable field note. The students, at one point in their experience at the Oasis, wanted to taste the wild fruit that grows there, comparing it with what they buy in the supermarket and noting the striking difference in flavour. Also in this case, at the end of the shared experience, as agreed beforehand, the parents of the students came to visit the Oasis park so that we could use the sunlight of that day to the end without having to spend time going back to school. The parents' help turned out to be crucial in getting their children home as they used car sharing, given the concerns about the pandemic state. In the following section below, I report the participants' responses. There are no responses in the slider scale between values in the range of 000 to 500 millimetres. There are 3 responses with values between 5 and 7.5

centimetres and 19 responses with values between 7.5 and 10 centimetres. Although slider scale data should be quoted in millimetres, here they are mentioned in centimetres for ease of reading.

#bellina_09 (5.8 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘I enjoyed the experience, and if I have to engage in sustainable behaviour to go on an adventure, I will change my attitude. *I enjoyed this experience because it made me want to keep the environment and my city clean because the Marecchia oasis park is wonderful for the presence of nature and the way it is kept clean! The shared experience carried out made me want to plant plants and trees: that way I could get the necessary food! Here I ate the wild fruit!*

#bellalei71 (6.9 centimetres on the slider scale) states that ‘Thanks to this shared experience, we discovered this place and I think it is great to have this kind of experience that is definitely sustainable, and in addition there is a beautiful view of nature! I will definitely come back because access to the oasis is free, plus *I had a great time with friends! The park is close to my house and it is very clean: I want to keep it as I found it, clean.* I think this first-hand experience with nature can help me change my behaviour towards acting more sustainably. *Today here I found delicious natural fruit: tastier than in the supermarket’.*

WR.00 (7.2 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘I really enjoyed this first-hand experience and I think we should have many more like it. *I had a lot of fun with friends and I ate cherries that tasted better to me.* This experience was instructive: it is good to have an experience in the midst of nature, only in this way we can discover new concepts and what biodiversity means. *After this experience, I hope to develop a more sustainable attitude in the future.*

tsuyu!<3 (8.8 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that *'Thanks to the experience, the stories of the adventurers and the place, I learnt to love and respect nature. I had a great time and would like to go on another similar adventure. Thanks to this experience in nature, I realised what it means to love the environment around us and therefore try to respect it more by perhaps keeping it clean. This wonderful experience inspires me to do more adventures similar to this in nature and maybe I can create a stronger bond with it'*.

#bloomesplosiva_09 (9 centimetres on the slider scale) states that *'I was really fascinated to see all those birds by the lake and all those dragonflies in the bushes, here is the beauty of nature. What a great adventure! I would do this adventure again with friends because I had so much fun. The experts shared interesting adventure stories, it would be nice to imitate them. During the experience, I saw my friends eating cherries picked in the wilderness and they were very very happy! Maybe this experience will help me change my behaviour towards more sustainable actions!'*

#ochako!<3 (9.7 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that *'The experts are kind and help me better understand the value of nature. 'I had a lot of fun with friends also because it is surrounded by nature'. Here I have observed many different animals and eaten wild fruit. The first-hand experience and the location inspire me to have a more sustainable attitude, as this place is close to the school. This experience will perhaps lead me to be closer to nature even if for the moment I am...eating it. These cherries are much tastier than the packaged ones - what fun instead of buying them!'*

Inductive analysis of questionnaire responses.

The inductive analysis of the responses to the questionnaire identified a number of recurring primary themes, continuously expressed by the majority of participants. As I begin the inductive analysis from the main question of the questionnaire, some common themes emerge. The experts present (the adventurer Ugolini and myself) are not often mentioned as a key factor for the shared experience to be repeated; instead, this peculiarity is more attributable to the characteristics of the place (Parco Oasi Marecchia) that inspired the experiential activities conducted by the focus group.

Frequently, beginning with the range between 5.0 centimetres and 7.5 centimetres of the slider scale responses, the sentences highlight how it is the peculiar characteristics of the place itself that favour the desire to repeat an adventurous experience that could also be respectful of the place where the experience takes place. In addition, it is the fun character of the experience that occurs together with one's classmates that are emphasised by the participants as inescapable factors in wanting to repeat the same or similar experience that would be sustainable for the place. The Marecchia Oasis Park, when compared to the other two places of this research project, is the only one with a *strong naturalistic component*, the *presence of animals* and even *edible wild fruit*. In fact, some participants expressed their opinions along these lines. #bellina_09 states that *'I liked this experience because it made me want to keep the environment and my city clean, because the Marecchia oasis park is wonderful for the presence of nature and the way it is kept clean'*! #bellalei71 (6.9 centimetres on the slider scale) states at the place of the experience *'I want to keep it as I found it: clean'*. WR.00 (7.2 centimetres on the slider scale) argues that *'This experience was instructive: it is good to have an experience in the midst of nature, only in this way we can discover new concepts and what biodiversity means!'*

In the last band, between 7.5 and 10, the students expressed themes common to the participants in the 5>7.5 band of the slider scale. Tsuyu!<3 states that *'Thanks to the experience, the stories of the adventurers and the place, I learnt to love and*

respect nature. I had a great time and would like to go on another similar adventure'. In addition, the same participant affirms, *'Thanks to this experience in nature, I realised what it means to love the environment around us and therefore try to respect it more by keeping it clean*'. Instead, the student #bloomesplosiva_09 (9 centimetres on the slider scale) is focused on the peculiarities of the place that favoured the emergence of a positive experience in contact with nature. She affirms *'I was really fascinated to see all those birds by the lake and all those dragonflies in the bushes: here is the beauty of nature*'.

In addition, in support of what has been noted above, #ochako!<3 (9.7 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms *'I had a lot of fun with friends also because it is surrounded by nature*'. In relation to the second sub-question compared to the principal question, several participants emphasised that it was the very characteristics of the place that inspired in them a greater connection and respect for the nature they encountered at the Marecchia Oasis Park. Tsuyu!<3 (8.8 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that *'This wonderful experience inspires me to do more adventures similar to this in nature and maybe I can create a stronger bond with it*'. In addition, In general, is it possible to deduce that the experiential activity in nature specifically at the Marecchia Oasis park led the participants to a stronger connection with nature. Many mentioned that the beauty of the place and the fact that it was cleanly preserved, these factors fostered in the participants' responses the emergence of an emotional feeling of care, interest and willingness to preserve the condition of the place as they found it. A common emerging theme that deviated from the three questions posed in the questionnaire but which the participants nevertheless wished to emphasise was the fact that most of them took pleasure in *eating wild fruit* that was present at the Oasi Parco Marecchia (p. 285, f.37-f38-f40).

It can be noted that this unexpected experience led students to reflect on the different taste they felt when compared to the fruit their families are used to buying at the supermarket. #bellina_09 claims that *'The experience we shared (at the Marecchia Oasis Park) made me want to plant plants and trees - so I could get the necessary food! Here I ate the wild fruits!*'. #bellalei71 (6.9 centimetres on the slider

scale) states *'Today here I found delicious natural fruit: tastier than in the supermarket'*. The common emerging theme focuses on the realisation that through the experience of tasting fruit, it becomes clear to the students that the same product has very different tastes depending on where it is picked or bought. #bloomesplosiva_09 (9 centimetres on the slider scale), confirming earlier statements by the other student: *'During the experience, I saw my friends eating cherries picked in the wilderness and they were very very happy!*

#ochako!<3 (9.7 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that *'This experience will perhaps lead me to be closer to nature even if for the moment I am...eating it. These cherries are much tastier than the packaged ones - what fun instead of buying them!'*. In relation to whether an adventurous experience can foster in the participants a greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place, a common theme does not always emerge from the participants' responses. At the same time, a desire for the place of the experiential activity to be preserved and kept clean emerges from the participants' responses. From these elements it can be deduced that the experience carried out by the four group fostered the emergence of a sense of care and affection for the place itself. A final analysis of the participants' responses shows that all of them would repeat the experience at the Oasis, but that this desire is more related to the fact that the experience was positive because it was fun and took place in a location characterised by the presence of nature in a preponderant manner. The role of experts, in this case, does not seem to be predominant as a factor in wanting to repeat the shared activities. The unexpected event that was highlighted by the participants was tasting the wild fruit at the oasis and comparing this taste with that of commonly bought fruit.

All participants expressed curiosity and surprise that the taste was completely different, prompting reflection on why this difference existed. A debate ensued among all present regarding this unexpected factor, triggering reasoning and reflections on the quality of the food we commonly buy in supermarkets. To conclude the analysis, several participants expressed a common theme of wanting to change their behaviour towards greater care for the environment and change their attitude towards more

sustainable living. A confirmation of this emerging theme, #bloomesplosiva_09 states that *'Maybe this experience will help me change my behaviour towards more sustainable actions!'*. On the same vein, WR.00 affirms that *'After this experience, I hope to develop a more sustainable attitude in the future'*.

21 out of 21 participants would repeat the shared experience they experienced, as all of them placed a mark of more than 500 millimetres on the slider scale and placed a mark on the word 'Yes' on the questionnaire to express their desire to repeat the experience (e.g. pp. 180-181).

Seventh shared experience

The last outdoor shared experience took place at the Slow-Food presidio *Camillone* in Cervia: the closest salt pan to Rimini. After reaching a water channel connecting the sea to the salt pans, we tried using canoes to reach the salt pans of direct experience. Unfortunately, after a number of attempts, we decided to reach the salt pans by walking, leaving the possibility of using canoes to a future day near us.

At the Slow-Food salt pan, we met salt workers Claudio, Bruno, Emilio and Alberto. For safety reasons, we divided the group into two small groups because at the request of the salt workers, the area closest to the salt pans has unstable ground due to the presence of sea water. The direct experience for the participants initially consisted of observing the salt harvesting work being carried out by the salt workers (including myself that day, as I have since become a salt worker too). Observation by the students was a crucial step in understanding how the technique of salt harvesting takes place. Since it is heavy work, the students were not asked to collect it directly with a shovel, but were given the opportunity for those who wanted to harvest a small amount in the nearest collection basin using only their hands.

Remarkable field note. After this first phase, some participants tasted the Cervia salt, which is sweet, noting the differences in taste and flavour between the salt used daily in their cooking and that of the presidio. As it is harvested using only wooden means and the labour of the salt workers, the harvesting process is sustainable (p. 286, f53-f54-f55).

In addition, given the peculiarity of the place and the harvesting technique, the sweet sea salt of Cervia manifests its biodiversity recognised by the fact that it has been a Slow-Food presidio since 2004. Also in this circumstance, the help of parents proved crucial for travel as they used car sharing. In the following section I report the participants' answers. There are no answers with values between 000 and 500

millimetres on the slider scale. There are 7 responses with values between 5 and 7.5 centimetres and 13 responses with values between 7.5 and 10 centimetres.

Participants' responses

#ochako! (6.0 centimetres on the slider scale) states that ‘The experience at the salt pan was pleasant, but not too much. *I was not too impressed by the place, however, the salt workers did a job that is admirable and certainly sustainable for the place. I would like to have a similar experience, but this one seems a bit too strenuous.* The salt workers are a good example of how we should behave to act more sustainably. We could behave like them if we want to pollute less: perhaps we could solve many ecological problems.

#bellalei71 (6.2 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘I did not like the experience at the salt pan very much and I am uncertain whether to do it again, although *the work of the salt miners is interesting.* I liked the previous experience better. *Observing the work of the salt workers allowed me to understand the concept of biodiversity and sustainability, because it was not clear before.* This eaten salt is unique! *I don't think I will change my lifestyle after the experience, but I will buy more local food with this salt.*

#love_09 (7.0 centimetres on the slider scale) states that ‘*The salt workers' community, especially Alberto and Claudio, have greatly inspired me in what could be my future adventurous experience: however, I would also do this experience again.* I have been impressed by their hard work! *Thanks to this direct experience, during which I observed, touched and tasted salt, I better understood the concept of sustainability.* The salt workers used their arms and did not pollute when they worked! *I also understood biodiversity, if this means that each food can have a*

different taste, unique and linked to a specific territory. Changing one's habits is not easy, however, I understood that I can help the environment if I buy local food: salt is present in all foods!

#amopizza# (8.0 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘Observing the salt workers, Sergio Claudio and Alberto, extracting salt was an incredible experience! *The experience is definitely sustainable because it has been done this way since Roman times-they work hard, and I would like to have a similar experience when I grow up. I was able to touch the salt, taste it and take it home. I think I understood the concept and what it means to act sustainably. The community of salt workers impressed me: they are an example to follow to understand that it is possible to change one's lifestyle in a more sustainable way, even buying only local food.*

Sami_lamella (9.0 centimetres on the slider scale) states that ‘*Alberto and Claudio (salt-workers) were very nice, they let me try to collect salt and then I ate it: I would do this experience again very gladly!* The air is quite clean, however, it was cleaner at the Oasis and I enjoyed it more But the salt workers are a great example for sustainability. Through observing the work done by salt workers, *I understood the meaning of sustainable human activity.* After these 3 experiences I will change my behavior, I will respect nature more.

diego_09 (10 centimetres on the slider scale) affirms that ‘I enjoyed seeing the salt workers at work, however, I don't want to do that. I don't want to do such hard work! I picked up some salt and will take it home. I realized that Cervia salt is unique; it is different from others because it is not bitter. *One experience is not enough for me to change my behaviour, but after this experience I will only buy Cervia salt.*

Inductive analysis of questionnaire responses.

The inductive analysis of the responses to the questionnaire identified a number of recurring primary themes, continuously expressed by the majority of participants. Several students showed some uncertainty as to whether or not to repeat the shared experience.

This was partly due to a misunderstanding as the students were asked to observe the work of the salt workers, and not to take part in it. In this sense, for example #ochako! (6.0 centimetres on the slider scale) and #bellalei71 (6.2 on the slider scale) express their feelings after the experience. #ochako states that *'The experience at the salt pan was pleasant, but not too much.[.]I would like to have a similar experience, but this one seems a bit too strenuous.* #bellalei71 (6.2 cen. on the slider scale) affirms that *'I did not like the experience at the salt pan very much and I am uncertain whether to do it again'*. In the same range between 5 and 7.5 centimetres of the slider scale, #love09 expresses a different concept than the two previous participants. The student states that *'The salt workers' community, especially Alberto and Claudio, have greatly inspired me in what could be my future adventurous experience: however, I would also do this experience again'*. On the slider scale 7.5>10, however, the repetition of the lived experience or a similar experience is a common theme emerging in their responses.

On this line, in fact, #amopizza#, Sami_Lamella_08 and Diego_09 state the following ideas. #amopizza# affirms that *'The experience is definitely sustainable because it has been done in this way since Roman times-they work hard, and I would like to have a similar experience when I grow up'*. Sami_Lamella_08 states that *'Alberto and Claudio (salt-workers) were very nice, they let me try to collect salt and then I ate it: I would do this experience again very gladly!* Related to this shared experience, while not all participants expressed a clear and strong desire to repeat this experience, on the other hand all participants expressed in their responses the emerging common theme related to a full understanding of the concept of sustainable

human activities and the concept of biodiversity. In addition, participants state that the experience appears to be from their point of view fully sustainable for the place where the direct experience occurred. In this sense #ochako! (6.0 cen. on the slider scale) affirms *'The salt workers are a good example of how we should behave to act more sustainably.*

We could behave like them if we want to pollute less: perhaps we could solve many ecological problems'. Love_09 highlights how observing the work of the salt workers gave (her) an understanding of the concepts of biodiversity and sustainability. In fact, the student states that *'Thanks to this direct experience, during which I observed, touched and tasted salt, I better understood the concept of sustainability. The salt workers used their arms and did not pollute when they worked! I also understood biodiversity. #Amopizza# outlines that 'The community of salt workers impressed me: they are an example to follow to understand that it is possible to change one's lifestyle in a more sustainable way, even buying only local food'*. The student Sami_lamella_08 claims that *'Through observing the work done by salt workers, I understood the meaning of sustainable human activity'*. It can be deduced from this focus group experience that through a precise activity the participants understood the meaning of biodiversity: *this occurred through tasting Cervia salt*. This was possible because its taste, through this direct experience, allowed a deeper understanding of the concept of biodiversity due to its uniqueness. It can be affirmed that the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the place, favoured the comprehension of the concepts of biodiversity and sustainable human activities, which previously in some cases had seemed too abstract and generic concepts.

In addition, another common theme emerges from the students' responses. Several participants affirm that after the experience at the Slow-Food Camillone Presidio, they will buy more local food that uses Cervia salt. Diego_09 states that *'One experience is not enough for me to change my behaviour, but after this experience I will only buy Cervia salt'*. In addition, on a similar line, Love_09 claims that *'Changing one's habits is not easy, however, I understood that I can help the environment if I buy local food: salt is present in all foods'*! At the same time,

#amopizza# also states that after the salina experience, *'One can change towards a more sustainable lifestyle even buying only local food'*. Reading the above responses of the 3 outdoor experiences, participants do not always express a desire to change their behaviour towards more sustainable action both in the places of the experience and in their private lives in general.

Observing the students' statements regarding a possible change in their own behaviour towards more sustainable action or a change of self that is less impactful on the environment, students often used words such as *'maybe I will change'* towards more environmentally sustainable behaviour, *'I will try to change'* something of my habits until *'I am not sure I will behave differently after'* these shared outdoor experiences. However, *the change* is already present as students express full awareness in noticing a clear difference between the taste of wild fruit and that bought at the supermarket and between the taste of salt they commonly use at home compared to that from Cervia. It can be stated that in particular the Oasi Parco Marecchia and the Camillone salt pan, as unique places with their own peculiarities, allowed the students of the focus group to carry out direct experiences based on the particular place as well as taste natural local food, not chemically treated, and thus deepen the concept of biodiversity and sustainability and give it a different value. The statements of numerous students that after the experience at Camillone salt-pan, they will buy more or only Cervia salt or food produced with Cervia salt, brings with it a change towards acting more sustainably and with less impact on the environment. Being more aware of locally produced food fosters a propensity to consume more of this food than food from further afield. The outdoor experiences of this research project can foster a change in one's habits towards a more sustainable action and behaviour (p. 286, f53).

A further analysis and conclusion emerges from the students' responses. Often an emerging theme relates to the importance given to the fact that in the outdoor stages, sustainability and biodiversity experts, through their work, are perceived as an *example to be followed or imitated if one wants to change one's behaviour towards more environmentally friendly action*. The example of the Mutoids, in particular Nikki and the salt workers, is a positive example that is often mentioned in the participants'

questionnaires. Sharing an experience with them, having a first-hand experience with these people who are passionate about their sustainable work and/or in defence of biodiversity provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts of biodiversity and sustainable human activities (p. 286, f53-f54-f55).

The engagement of people who do not strictly work in either education or pedagogy (adventurers/experts in sustainability and biodiversity), but who are experts in their respective fields allowed the students to experience and benefit from the expertise and positive results of the work carried out for years by these experts.

Analysis of the responses concerning the questions posed in the questionnaire: first question section.

-Do you feel that the intervention of the external expert - adventurer or sustainability expert- has created in you a greater desire to have an adventure experience that is also sustainable for the place where it will take place?

In this section of the chapter, I delve into a more in-depth analysis inherent to the above-mentioned main question by focusing more on the students' responses from outdoor experiences. The students' responses to the main question revealed that in all three outdoor experiences the role played by the external expert had a positive influence on their desire to repeat a similar adventurous experience, although there are distinctions depending on where the place-based experiential activity occurred. The participants' responses regarding their experience in Mutonia emphasise the fact that Nikki played a crucial role in making them feel at ease and able to make a connection with that specific place (p. 284. f22-f25)

It emerges from the responses that the philosophy at Mutonia based on reusing disused materials to create works of art and avoiding buying new objects if not strictly necessary, positively influenced their exploration of the concept of sustainable human activities. The students describe the Mutonia site as a place of strong inspiration also with regard to their possible change towards more sustainable acting; in particular several participants state that after the direct experience they will give a different value and importance to objects they have ceased using or that have been thrown away in the cupboard of their homes.

Several reflections emerge from the questionnaires on the fact that many students realise that they often buy new objects without having a real need for them. The consumerist tendency that particularly characterises societies on the Western side,

several participants claim, can be better understood in places like Mutonia. In addition, students report that the Mutonia community is a *vivid and clear example* of how one can live more respectfully with one's environment by thinking before buying a new object whether it is strictly necessary or one can creatively adapt another object, modify it, for one's own needs (p. 284. f22-f25)

This place, it emerges from the students' feedback, allows them to reflect on the fact that everything we buy ends up in landfills which have an impact on the environment in which we live and that this is no longer sustainable (p. 284 f22). To conclude this section, several students expressed their satisfaction at having created an art object during the art workshop that was conducted in Mutonia. This direct experience emerges from both the responses and the photos (p. 284 f23). In the questionnaires, it is reported that the concept of sustainability and sustainable human activities was easier to be grasped thanks to the above-mentioned workshop. In addition, having created works of art using waste materials that were already present in Mutonia, several students stated how their experience was also sustainable for the place of the experience (p. 284, f23-f24-f25-f26-f27).

At the same time, in the questionnaires relating to the outdoor adventures all the participants ticked the word '*Si*' to indicate their willingness to repeat a similar adventure also thanks to the presence of the external expert, it is nevertheless possible to deduce from the students' responses that not all of them spent words in favour of the idea that the experience they had is also sustainable for the place where the experience took place. However, it is possible to deduce from the photos of the students at the end of the art workshop how sustainable the experience was for the place itself, although this is not always emphasised in the participants' responses.

Regarding the second place-based experiential activity, it emerges that the participation of adventurer Davide Ugolini was an important factor in the students undertaking that specific adventure at the Parco Oasi Marecchia. However, it emerges that the X factor was more the creation of the desire for the possibility of that adventure during the indoor phase. In addition, as mentioned in the previous chapter,

the interviews between students and adventurer on the choice of place were crucial in fostering the emergence of the desire to have an adventure experience that was sustainable for the place of the experience.

To conclude this section of the chapter on the experience undertaken at the Camillone salt pan, it emerges from the students' responses that the work observed at the salt pan conducted by the salt workers was the decisive factor that captured the students' attention, encouraging them to repeat a similar experience, even in another place with similar characteristics (p.286 f51-f53-f54-f55).

Analysis of the responses concerning the questions posed in the questionnaire: second sub-question section.

-Do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the arguments he discussed can inspire you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it?

In this section of the chapter, I delve into an analysis concerning the above-mentioned sub-question by focusing more on the students' answers acquired in the outdoor phases. Some students stated that in some cases the topics discussed by the external expert helped them to rediscover a closer bond with nature, although this feeling was formed more through the direct experience in nature, rather than through the arguments advanced by the expert.

From the students' responses it emerges how the type of emotions linked to the experience and the characteristics and peculiarities of the place itself, positively or not influenced the creation of a greater closeness and connection towards the nature. As for the first outdoor experience in Mutonia, this one was more focused on deepening sustainable human activities. Having stated this, Mutonia itself is surrounded by nature and is located a few metres from the Marecchia river: these factors allowed the expert (Nikki) to create connections with the nature of the place together with the participants. However, the various scrap materials present, the several artistic works immersed in a naturalistic context, seems from the students' responses not to have created a particular greater connection or bond with nature or the nature present in that place.

The direct experience at the Marecchia Oasi Park, on the other hand, turned out to be entirely different. In the students' responses concerning this adventure, it clearly emerges how it was above all the place and the adventure undertaken in this specific place that fostered in them the emergence of a feeling of affection, care and a desire

to preserve that particular place. Several participants emphasised in the questionnaires that having a direct adventurous experience in a place characterised by the presence of nature, the presence of animals and the possibility of eating wild fruit, created in them a greater connection with the nature of that place and above all a desire to preserve it. The unique characteristics of the Oasi Park, when compared to the other two places, emerges from the responses positively influenced the entire experiential journey.

The role played by the expert, adventurer Davide Ugolini, consisted in continuing to build an emotional bond that had begun during the indoor phase. While the adventurous stories narrated during the outdoor experience at the Oasi do not seem to have fostered the desire to have more experiences in nature in order to create a stronger connection with it, the human rapport created between all the participants and the fact that Davide was present during the experience, these factors played a more incisive role than others. Several students, as reported on the questionnaires and in the field notes, stated that knowing that Davide would be present during the experience at the Oasi, motivated them more to participate in the second outdoor focus group experience. The human relationship and friendship, the mutual empathy between the students and Davide, emerged from the responses as an X factor for the students to take part in the outdoor experience at the Parco Oasi, motivated by knowing that they would meet Davide again. To conclude this section of the chapter, several deductions emerged from the responses concerning the last experience: the Camillone salt pan in Cervia. In this case, the work carried out by the salt workers and the uniqueness of the place, linked to the biodiversity of the salt produced there, led the students to encourage several reflections.

In the participants' questionnaires, there are several references to feelings of admiration and awe for what is being accomplished as a sustainable human activity with the aim of harvesting food unique in its biodiversity. While the responses do not emphasise the creation of a special relationship or a stronger bond with nature in general or in particular of that place, on the other hand, the participants emphasise their astonishment at the existence of a place that seems to be out of time and that they

never imagined could exist in this contemporary era, especially just a few kilometres from their homes. Admiration for the salt workers, the uniqueness of the place and the salt that is produced, make it possible to affirm from the students' answers that the direct experience fostered in them the emergence of a greater awareness of the importance of maintaining and preserving certain places over time, as well as their environment (p. 286, f49-f53-f56).

In practical terms, the work specifically carried out by the salt workers was the X factor that favoured the emergence of a desire to create a closer bond with nature, even if not specifically with that place, but in general; above all, reflections emerged from the participants on the importance that certain human activities can be sustainable for the places where they work (p. 286, f53-f54-f55).

Analysis of the responses concerning the questions posed in the questionnaire: third sub-question section.

-Do you feel that an adventurous experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where the experience takes place?

In this section of the chapter, I develop an analysis inherent to the above-mentioned sub-question by focusing more on student responses acquired in the outdoor stages. The students' responses to the last sub-question revealed that the experiences they undertook in the outdoors fostered the emergence of greater care and interest for the places of experiential activities. These statements are particularly prevalent in the responses concerning the experiences occurred at the Marecchia Oasis Park and the Cervia salt pan. As far as the Marecchia Oasi Park is concerned, it is clear from the responses that the students would favour it to be preserved, since through the experience they initially got to know a place that was unknown to them and during the experience, they developed a feeling of care and affection for that specific place, as gathered from the field notes and student questionnaires. However, several students in this section of the last sub-question of the questionnaire wanted to highlight a factor that was not explicit in the question. Several participants wanted to emphasise the fact that in particular at the Camillone saltworks in Cervia they had the opportunity to have a direct experience that favoured the emergence of a greater awareness in them of the meanings regarding the concept of sustainable human activities and biodiversity.

In this sense, analysing the responses, it emerges that having direct and particular experiences such as the opportunity to eat what was produced in that place (s), *thus learning through tasting*, fostered the development of a greater awareness of the importance of local food and a greater sense of interest and affection for those specific places after the experience undertaken (p. 286, f50-f56).

Relationships

The building of relationships between students, sustainability and biodiversity experts and an adventurer is a characteristic element of the outdoor phase of this research project. In contrast to the first phase, characterised by indoor experiential spaces, limited freedom of movement and a still pandemic context that required the use of masks, the second phase of this project was shaped by place-based experiential activities that took place in outdoor spaces with fewer restrictions than the first phase.

This more informal, consistently dynamic context with few space restrictions fostered socialisation among those who were present (p. 143, f1-f2). In order for the reader to be able to understand the context in which the three outdoor experiential activities took place, it becomes useful to highlight the fact that the focus group consisted of students from a second middle school class who had experienced their first two years of middle school in the pandemic context, often following lessons remotely in alternating phases after 4 months of complete suspension of in-presence lessons at school. The first experiences as a class in outdoor contexts began almost after two years of middle school attendance at Mutonia near Santarcangelo. In the students' responses, a number of recurring themes emerged that are strongly linked to the outdoor context: freedom of movement, not having to maintain a social distance between them, the possibility of hugging each other, etc. This new, rather informal context has allowed them to unleash their creativity in the activities that they conducted in the three different outdoor places.

Several students report in their responses, the joy and pleasure they felt at simply being in that place all together. In addition, the experiential activities conducted in Mutonia, Parco Oasi Marecchia and the salt.pan Camillone, fostered socialisation and having funny experiences through which new knowledge was co-constructed, while at the same time having a good time. In this sense, the students Sami_lamella_08, states that *'I had a great time with friends here in Mutonia!'*. Tsuyu!<3 also expresses a similar concept, affirming that *'I really enjoyed the art workshop with Nikki and what fun it is here'!*. Empathy and more spontaneous human

relationships emerged from the students' responses, in addition, the students particularly appreciated the human relationship established between them and Nikki, the mutoid who helped us deepen the concept of sustainable human activities through the creation of artistic objects using waste materials.

Empathy and spontaneous human relationships, which also developed due to the more informal situation and the absence of physical boundaries, emerge from the students' responses as well as from the photos (p. 285, f41.). The students, analysing the feedback from their questionnaires, particularly appreciated the human relationship established between them and Nikki, the mutoid who helped us explore the concept of sustainable human activities through the creation of artistic objects from discarded materials. The second shared experience took place in a special place because it was the only one of the three that is characterised by nature, the presence of animals and edible wild fruit, saw the presence of Davide Ugolini. The presence of the adventurer did not change the nature of the activities that the students wanted to lead; the Davide's presence was anyway essential for the students in strengthening a bond that had already been created during the indoor phase and which continued in the outdoor spaces, albeit for half a day. The human contact, talking to Davide, interacting with him, asking him for advice on possible micro-adventures to undertake in the vicinity, and all playing together at the end of the day with frisbees, soccer and volleyball, fostered spontaneous relationships among the participants (p. 285, f41). Several students stated in their responses that they would not forget that particular experience, making that day at the Marecchia Oasi Park a memorable one (p. 285, f41-f43).

To conclude, during the last shared experience at the Cervia salt pans, human relationships and friendships were established between the students and the salt workers. The human relationships created are partially different from those established with Nikki and Davide. In the students' responses to this experience, admiration is often expressed for the work of the salt workers. When possible, some of the salt workers also established a relationship with the students by telling them about the history of the place or the traditions that link local communities to salt harvesting.

Emotional responses

In the outdoor phase of this OAE research project, it can be deduced from both the responses and the photos that especially during the three outdoor experiences, several positive emotional responses can be noted (p. 285, f40-f41). The outdoor setting, the full freedom of movement, and the fewer restrictions as far as the pandemic context was concerned, fostered more interactions between the participants.

In this first part of this section of the chapter dedicated to the common emotional responses that emerged from the shared outdoor experiences, I approach by laying out a general introduction as I took part in the above-mentioned experiences and I was in a position to share some emotional responses with the participants. Whenever an outdoor experience began, the common spirit of the group was to go and have fun and enjoy this special day. In particular, sharing outdoor experiences with them, reading their responses and analysing the photos taken in the field of experiences, for many students simply being in the outdoor turned out to be an absolutely aesthetically engaging experience. In this sense, some participants expressed also that one can use the outdoors for one's own personal growth. Furthermore, living the three experiences in the outdoor spaces involved an emotional, active and cognitive connection with the places of the experiences. The three outdoor experiences thus elicited several physical and emotional responses. These (responses) were layered over time, and each time we set out again to begin a new outdoor experience they elicited new emotional responses. These layers of emotional responses influenced how participants approached the new environments.

The most common were a sense of belonging to a special group, a sense of freedom, joy and happiness, from which flowed an overall positive well-being that words could not always describe. In addition, the outdoors was attributed a sense of goodness and moral value that made the experiences more meaningful and worth repeating, whether they were the same or similar. The responses highlighted common feelings felt by the participants: feelings of affection, interest and concern for the

environment were expressed, suggesting a sense of belonging and a desire to care for the places of experience. The Marecchia Oasis Park, in particular, fostered the emergence of a feeling of preserving and protecting the place over time: as they had come to know it through the experience. The emotional responses described by the participants indicate a deep connection and commitment to the outdoor environment.

For several of the participants, it was clearly important to create a sense of connection with the external world, which was reinforced when there were no walls around them, that is, when outside the school environment. Members of the focus groups laughed, joked, and did silly things in real outdoor places, but often applied these emotional memories to the outdoors as a whole. There are a number of personal responses of how the outdoors contributed to their health and well-being, with a set of emotions they had not felt before those experiences with their classmates. It is clear that the relationships between all participants (students, adventurers and experts in sustainability and biodiversity) were crucial in the outdoor phases and that being outdoors helped all participants interact with each other and with specific places in different ways that increased the pleasure and meaning in a positive sense of their experiences. The friendship relationships that were strengthened especially in the outdoor environments between students, adventurers and sustainability/biodiversity experts fostered positive emotional responses, as reported in the questionnaires and photos. From the students' responses, it is evident that the ability to empathise with each other among the participants also allowed the experiences to become special. The playful, self-ironic style, characterised by a hint of lightness and a willingness to joke with life marked the atmosphere of the experiences concluded in this research project. The external experts, it can be affirmed after the analysis of the questionnaires and interpretation of the photos, were all characterised by these attitudes and behaviours that favoured the emergence of positive emotional responses.

Human contact, the opportunity to interact with all of them in an informal and playful manner, is a key factor that emerges from both the students' responses and the photos of the experiences (p. 284, f21 p. 285 f30-37). Even the salt workers, despite having a considerable age difference from the students, always maintained a playful and

direct attitude that was appreciated by most of the students, as reported in the participants' questionnaires and field notes. Positive emotional responses, however, also emerged from direct experiences in the outdoors. Some experiences that occurred at the focus group were completely unexpected, such as the art workshop at Mutonia, the discovery of bird feathers and porcupine quills at the Oasis Park (p. 285, f33-f34). In particular, students' interest was aroused by being able to taste the wild fruit present in these places: a totally unexpected experience repeated with the tasting of Cervia's sweet salt, although the latter was more expected. This learning about the differences in tastes between pre-packaged food and naturally produced food also encouraged the emergence of positive emotions and above all reflections on the importance of the difference between processed and natural food (p.286, f56).

To conclude this section of the current chapter, the feeling of having developed a connection with the places of the outdoor experiences was expressed with a mix of pleasure and increased engagement due to the complicity of the relationships created during the experiences and added to the meaning of being outdoors.



F19 - Cycling to Mutonia!



F20 - The first works of art seen in Mutonia after the east gate



F21 - A little bike race before visiting Mutonia!



F22 - Taking inspiration from the place: Mutonia, where everything changes....



F23 - The art workshop begins: the girls are immediately at work!



F24 - Shared experience with students continues: I help them



F25 - The first to go: Diego_09 using a bicycle chain and other material



F26 - So much effort on the part of this student to realise her personal work of art



F27 - some girls finished their artwork in front of the Mutonia Arch, symbol of...everything is changing



F28 - Some students allow me to use their artwork



F29 - Answering questionnaires



F30 - parents join us at the end of the experience



F31 - Arriving at the Marecchia Oasi Park



F32 - Walking with legs: our sustainable means for this adventure



F33 - Observing nature behind the fences: the lake, birds and nature



F34 - Observing Nature



F35 - Recognising different animal species by comparing them with those found on the panels: this is outdoor education



F36 - Older (PhD) student also observe nature with younger ones



F37 - Nature gives us wild fruit: what do we do? do we taste it?



F38 - In the meantime Davide joined in: even adventurers have to eat, healthy and organic



F39 - Jokes between us: some we eat the fruit, some we use the freesbee



F40 - That fruit is too good



F41 - We worked hard today: we deserve some chill out



F42 - The real exhausting moment: answering questions



F43 - End of experience: parents carpooling



F 44 - We try to reach the salt pans by canoe: unfortunately we can't...we'll go on walk



F 45 - The first view of the salt pans: you can recognise the salt mountain over there



F 46 - The salt pan is a slow-food presidio: it is unique



F 47 - The exploration phase begins for the students: the salt workers ask us to split into two groups for safety



F 48 - The exploration continues



F 49 - The first salt miner arrives: Sergio. The exploration continues even though the Sun is right in front of our eyes



F 50 - First taste of salt: it is different from the usual salt



F 51 - Diego_09 watches salt workers and sustainable working



F 52 - Touching the salt before eating it: this is a sensorial experience



F 53 - Students and salt workers



F 54 - Three generations of salt workers at work: Alberto, Bruno and Werther



F 55 - Today I have to work hard too: students watch



F 56 - Students, Sergio and a parent taste Cervia salt

Mixing emotional responses from outdoor activities



F 57 - Learning through salt harvesting: I am also a salt worker



F 58 - Having fun in Mutonia with Nikki: it's sustainable fun



F 59 - Recognising the biodiversity of some typical local species



F 60 - The satisfaction of having made your own sustainable craft in Mutonia



F 61 - The sun is strong at the salt pan: it is difficult to take pictures, but the sun is part of the salt production process



F 62 - Observing the animal species present at Parco Oasi Marecchia



F 63 - Bringing salt to someone is a symbol of future prosperity: Camillone salt pan



F 64 - Filling in the questionnaires in their folders with their own drawings in Mutonia



F 65 - Having fun with each other at the Marecchia Oasi Park

Chapter 12: conclusions and considerations on the findings of this research project

Introduction

This research project originated in terms of its foundations and themes to be developed before the pandemic outbreak, therefore in the course of the project some themes were more developed than others. Having stated this, there were always some reference points on which this research project was centred: to bring innovative elements into the field of outdoor education that had not been explored or researched previously. *Innovation* and *change* have been my guiding thoughts over these three years of research.

The first innovative factor of this project concerned the figure of the adventurer and the interaction with the participant, in this case 21 students between the ages of 12 and 13. Some authors have taken an interest in the figure of the adventurer, drawing different conclusions depending on the study being pursued and sometimes to incidental findings (Lyng, 1990; Krein, 2007; Brymer, Downey & Gray, 2009; Brymer, 2010). Nevertheless, the scientific literature or studies of outdoor education do not yet see the presence of empirical research that see interaction between *students* and *adventurers*.

The initial intention was based on the idea that the adventures narrated in presence by some adventurers, could act as a spark for students to see them as positive examples with the aim of being inspired by their adventures to, then, undertake their own adventures in iconic places near students' homes (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). The characteristics of adventure, such as uncertainty, exploration, contact with nature and the unexpected events that often occur during an adventure and lead adventurers to make decisions, could have pedagogical elements, since the above factors leads a

person (adventurer or not) to set priorities on the decisions to be undertaken (Gregoretti, 2019; Di Giorgio, 2023). The second innovative element of this project involved the search for specific places where human activities were sustainable, or sustainable and in defence of biodiversity.

This approach was clearly inspired by studies and literature related to pedagogy of place and research on place-based experiential activities aimed at changes towards more sustainable behaviour, building connections and affection for familiar places to which we connect positive experiences (Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Hill, 2010, 2013; Hill, & Brown, 2014). The type of place researched and its peculiarities played an incisive role during the outdoor phase of this research. A final innovative factor characterising this project was the methodology used to collect data after the experiential activities: a mixed method. This was used for the first time in this research as the aim was to find an effective data collection design so that certain results and trends would not be missed in the data analysis. In this sense, as already discussed in chapter 9, the quantitative data expressed in centimetres and not in millimetres as the scientific literature would have it (Pallotti, 2022) on slider scales, allowed for a more structured and in-depth reading of the qualitative data. After attending Professor Pallotti's statistics lectures, my intuition led me to design the mixed method of data acquisition reported in chapter 9. Qualitative data being introduced by numerical data, it is more difficult for it to be subject to more and different interpretations, thus avoiding some of the critiques associated with exclusively qualitative data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The innovation consists in being able to intuit quickly the trend of a group or an individual relating to the experiential activities they are carrying out thanks to some graphs, as can be deduced from the example placed on a single participant extrapolated from the focus group graph (graph p. 194).

Other points of reference guided me and at the same time supported the basis on which to ground the concepts and then develop them in relation to this OAE research project. One of these consists of the trend observed by some scholars since the late 1990s that new generations undertake fewer direct experiences in naturalistic

settings than in the past (Rivkin, 2000; Louv, 2005; Pani & Biolcati, 2006; Van Bottenbourg & Lotte, 2010; Boyd, 2014; Farné & Agostini, 2014; Farné, 2018; Bortolotti, 2019). The reasons for fewer experiential activities taking place outdoors, some scholars argue, are numerous.

However, it is clear from extensive research that the diffusion first of social media, then of devices, or simply of experiential activities that take place only in the virtual world, have fostered the emergence of new habits in young people, up to the most extreme consequences such as withdrawal from social life and consequent self-isolation (Turkle, 2010; Young, 2013; Boyd, 2014; Ricci, 2017; Volpi, 2021). The responses to this new trend, first observed in Japan in the 1970s, can also partly be traced back to the lack of stimulation and motivation on the part of young people to see the outdoors as preferable to virtual places (Spitzer, 2016; Ricci, 2017; Lavenia, 2018; Volpi, 2021). The idea or desire to have an adventurous experience, which characterised the dreams of several teenagers for decades after the Second World War, seems to have lost its appeal since the 2000s. In addition, spending less time outdoors results in a lack of connection to natural environments and a care for specific places that may never form (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

The restrictive conditions, particularly in Italy, imposed for two years, which have hit students or the younger generation the most, are showing the emergence of a youth malaise characterised by a difficulty in resuming experiential activities, as was the practice before the pandemic (Crepet, 2020; Recalcati, 2021a, 2021b; UNIPA, 2020; Esposito et al, 2021; Gili & coll., 2021; Langhi & coll., 2022). This research took these new conditions into account as it took place during the pandemic period.

Outdoor education related to this research project

Outdoor activities are, in the context of outdoor education, aimed at creating an abundance of opportunities for students to become more involved in developing a love for the outdoors, nature, joy and, at the same time, the co-construction of new knowledge with a playful approach.

What is stated in the opening of this section, emerged in the final findings in a clear way particularly with regard to the emotional responses and the building of friendships that occurred in the outdoor phase of this research project. In addition, it is also correct to state that the indoor lessons with the adventurers (although they took place within four walls) had the function of fostering the emergence of a desire to continue the outdoor experiences of the second phase of this research project. This emerged as necessary as the research project took place during the pandemic context, with the participants forced into semi-confinement in the previous year (2020-2021). As Recalcati (2023) points out, the traumatic experience of the pandemic exacerbated the tendency towards self-isolation. The psychiatrist and psychologist Recalcati and the scholar Emiliana Mannese (2023) claim that desire is a push towards the open, which counteracts the securitarian tendency of our time. 'The hypermodern forms of unease, especially that of youth, we could easily observe how there is a growing fatigue in *desiring*' (Recalcati, 2023, p. 4). The erasure of the desire to perform any action has reached its peak during lockdowns in particular for young people, as stated by several Italian scholars (Crepet, 2023; Recalcati, 2023, Mannese, 2023). Otherwise, a focal point was in this research project to place the desires of the students (focus groups) at the centre of which activities, which places they wanted to choose and what they wanted to experience once in the outdoors.

Direct experiences in the outdoors facilitate knowledge of one's environment, help break the daily routine and foster socialisation (Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Bortolotti, 2019). In fact, the outdoors is often associated with holistic and spatial, symbolic opportunities and offers a range of experiences that allow the conceptual

freedom necessary for new ideas to flourish. Several authors state that, in general, contact with natural environments is regenerating and increases the sense of well-being (Schultz & Tabanico, 2007; Taylor & Kuo, 2009). The values attributed to the outdoor environment, whether intrinsic or culturally constructed, thus influence the future actions of those taking part in outdoor education programmes.

Therefore, positive emotions encourage creativity and exploration in pupils, expanding options for how we live, solve problems and manage future threats. Some scholars such as Kahn and Kellert (2002), and Schultz and Tabanico (2007), argue that important elements of personal and social development are directly attributed to proximity to nature when experiential activities are offered in contact with it. Studies conducted by Hattie et al. (1997) confirm that some of the stages inherent in personal and social development are fostered by outdoor education programmes. Other scholars, such as Priest and Gass (2005), suggest that such developments lead to facilitating metaphorical transfer to enhance learning and increase the likelihood that it will be useful in other situations, although other scholars disagree. Furthermore, several authors suggest that being outdoors can be exciting and stimulating and encourages a person to focus on the present and become intensely aware of his or her surroundings (Priest & Gass, 2005; Kaplan, 2007). However, the potential of outdoor experiences to generate interconnected, holistic and interdisciplinary learning is difficult to determine, both because of the difficulty in articulating this learning style and because *the results cannot be measured*. Open-ended practices are worthwhile, but they are not yet accepted by some educational orthodoxies that seek clear and measurable final positive outcomes (Codd, 2005; Hill, 2011; Boyes, 2012).

In a different way, *the holistic nature of outdoor learning* involves students in the moment or event and, as such, cannot be broken down into definable stages. This peculiarity of outdoor education was also reflected in this project, however the two phases such as indoor and outdoor gave rise to different results and emotional responses. Returning to the concepts expressed earlier concerning places and the connection one can create with them through place-based experiences, Wattchow and Brown (2011) highlight how encounters between people and places can foster the

emergence of holistic experiences. In particular, place-responsive education as a pedagogical and philosophical basis for outdoor education advocated by Wattchow and Brown (2011) could contribute 'significantly to the well-being of both people and places' (p. 75). The above mentioned scholars believe that a deeper understanding of what happens when people encounter place is a necessary part of helping students learn about themselves and their communities, as a sense of 'who we are' is built on a sense of 'where we are'.

Therefore, it is possible to state that specific places offer opportunities to develop a depth of understanding and emotional responsiveness that can strengthen attachment to particular places (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Place-responsive education in outdoor education, on the other hand, emphasises the specificity of places and contextualises learning, by deepening our understanding of where we live and helping to develop realistic responses to local social and environmental changes, as described by Wattchow and Brown (2011). The pedagogical philosophy related to specific places has not been examined in depth specifically in this section, and this is to leave room for other citations, as the scientific literature related to outdoor experiential activities and their benefits is considerable. The studies and scholars who have ventured into this field are still numerous. In fact, according to some authors, being outdoors can induce positive emotions and rejuvenation; these statements within outdoor education have raised debates on the transferability of skills and abilities acquired during direct experiences to other day-to-day contexts. With regard to this question, several scholars have expressed their doubts since the responses observed in certain places due to certain circumstances are precisely related to specific conditions and thus not easily transferable to other contexts (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b; Brown, 2010).

Outdoor activities were introduced not as a deliberate pursuit of transferring acquired skills and abilities to other different contexts, but as opportunities to engage students, increase knowledge of the environment, gain insights, build social networks and improve athletic performance. In fact, the reference point within of outdoor education is the value of the experience itself (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Many of

these early outdoor experiences can be a significant indicator in the personal growth of pupils and can be seen as influencing their values and attachment to the natural world in the years to come. In practice to conclude this final section, outdoor practices can best respond to local needs (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). The findings of this research are in line with the concepts outlined above, as all three outdoor activities were inspired by the specificities of the places, as each of them has in its human activities a reaction and development in response to the needs that have developed locally.

Findings and considerations on this OAE project

The findings from this study are multiple and related to the two different environments that characterised the seven experiential activities: the first indoor phase and then the outdoor phase. In accordance with interpretive narrative research, I chose to represent the findings through a variety of genre: the quantitative section through graphs and the four bands of graphs illustrated in chapter 9. As stated earlier, the quantitative data has the function in this research project to introduce the qualitative data. Emerging common themes were instead selected if they were present at least 15 times out of 21 questionnaires for each shared experience completed.

In these conclusions, I elaborate and provide some conclusive analysis on the use of the mixed method adopted and the positive and negative elements it brought. Furthermore, in the second qualitative part, inductively analysing the responses in search of recurring themes. In addition, then, I have created a text in chapters 10 and 11 that retains the richness and complexity of what the participants have stated or explained, giving as it does a version of the real in a way that still allows readers to feel imaginatively inside the being described (Denzin, 1997). In this concluding section of this chapter, I focus in particular on the qualitative data since the quantitative data have been extensively analysed in chapter 9. Nevertheless, to end this parenthesis concerning the quantitative data, apart from the first indoor shared experience, the slider scales (through the graphs at pp. 181-182-187-188-193) show numerical data above number five in all the other following six experiences.

The numerical data range between 7.5 centimetres and 10 on the slider scale showed the highest value from the largest number of participants in two specific shared experiences. These were present in both the second (indoor) and sixth (outdoor) shared experiences. These precise numerical data take on the role of indicators of the fact that in some specific shared experiences, students responded more positively to the main question of the questionnaire through a higher numerical value. The mixed method used in this research project for data collection was aimed

at a more extensive and comprehensive data collection that did not leave out certain phenomena that would be lost by using only a qualitative data collection method; the design of this mixed method is structured to facilitate and clearer analysis and induction of the collected data, and its validity depends on the aims (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007a Hall & Howard, 2008).

The limitation resulting from the simple numerical data consists in the fact that a numerical figure indicates on a scale of 100 millimetres (e.g. 90 millimetres out of 100) unequivocally whether or not the participant would like to repeat the completed experience. This objective data gives rise to a trend to be analysed through the creation of continuous data, or '*dati continui*' (Pallotti, 2021, 2022). From another point of view, the mere numerical data does not provide any motivation/reflection as to why the student placed her/his mark (e.g) on 90 millimetres. In this sense, only the association of the numerical data (slider scale) with the qualitative data (responses on the questionnaire) provides a clearer picture of the dynamics of the responses given and thus a broader and deeper analysis. At the same time, it is the qualitative responses that explain some of the numerical data collected on the slider scale. Since the second indoor experience (in the fourth band $-7.5 > 10 - 15$ out of 19 students on the slider scale) gathered the highest numerical data: the students' feedback explains why this occurred. A recurring theme expressed by the majority of the participants was that students in the first shared experience were convinced that we would not continue with the project.

After the second experience with the first adventurer, the recurring themes from the questionnaires state that the satisfaction of having taken part in the experience, the fact that the adventurer was extremely empathetic, the curiosity about the content watched and the possibility of doing one's own micro-adventures in the second phase, are a key to understanding why the numerical data from the second shared experience is significantly higher than the numerical data from the first shared experience. From the third shared experience, the 'indoor graphs' provide a rapid interpretation but no precise and regular trend emerges from them. This does not always emerge clearly from the participants' responses. Considering that many

students showed a strong interest in the adventures undertaken by Pelò and his ability to empathise with the students, it is possible to deduce that the surprise effect of talking and interacting with an adventurer was diminished as the third experience was similar to the second one already experienced. At the same time, the sixth outdoor experience the slider scale expresses that 15 participants out of 21, placed a mark in the last range between 7.5 centimetres and 10.

Some recurring themes emerge from the responses and these facilitate an analysis as to why the students have, for the majority, chosen the Marecchia Oasi Park as the place where they would prefer to repeat the experience that is also sustainable for the place itself. Qualitative recurring themes, allow an analysis of the numerical data and a possible interpretation of it. Recurring themes expressed several times such as the students' satisfaction in watching the animals, the lush vegetation, the freedom to choose the route they wanted, the unexpected tasting of the local wild fruit, and knowing that they would meet Davide again, these factors contributed to indicating this shared experience as the one they would most want to repeat. In addition, when analysing the responses, the recurring theme of preserving the Marecchia Oasi Park emerges. Comparing the responses with the other two outdoor experiences, this place and the experience that was undertaken by the students fostered the emergence of a sense of defence and conservation of the place as it was first encountered, not found in the same way with regard to Mutonia and the Camillone salt pan. More from the photos (pp. 283-284) as well as the field notes, it emerges that watching the animals in the Park, recognising the species by comparing them with those on the panels (pp. 283-284), fulfilled the desire expressed to be in contact with animals, a desire born after experiencing Run for Rhino during the indoor phase with the adventurer Pelò.

An additional note deriving both from my personal participation in the shared experience and from the photos documenting the experience at the Marecchia Oasi park, the recognition of some animals present both on the place and on the panels, made it possible to deepen the theme of biodiversity deriving from the presence of some native birds typical of the Marecchia Valley. Their watching, as acknowledged by some participants, fostered a deepening of the concept of biodiversity. Although

the participants were asked a particular question with two other sub-questions associated with it, the variety of the responses given by the participants denotes that the question on the questionnaire took on the role of lighting a spark. In practical terms, the main question was not only the purpose of the study, but gave rise to co-construction of new knowledge and often unexpected responses due to the particular characteristics of each place and the presence of the external experts.

In addition, the abundance of very different and shared experiences, the presence of external experts with unique and personal background and experiences, fostered the emergence of recurring themes, each very different from the others, depending on where one was and with which expert. Nevertheless, focusing on the specific questions answered by the students, the following conclusions can be drawn. On the one hand, the quantitative data indicate that from the second shared experience onwards, the experiences undertaken by the students (of the focus group) gave rise to a desire to invent or live an adventurous experience. The fact that the first experiences took place indoors did not allow further investigation of the sustainability of these experiences for the place in which they occurred. Instead, data emerged on the sustainability for the place of the experience undertaken after the indoor phases. In this sense, the data did not always produce a single trend, but rather themes specifically related to the place of the experience or the people who were in these places. The answers given in some cases were more nuanced and less precise as to whether the experience would be sustainable for the place or not always sustainable or not sufficiently sustainable. Concerning the question -do you think that the intervention of the external expert and the topics he discusses can inspire you to do more experiential activity in nature with the aim of regaining a stronger connection with it- this one gave rise to consistently positive responses.

Regarding the sub-question whether you think an adventure experience can create in you a sense of greater care and affection for the place where it takes place, participants answered positively most of the times. It is difficult to establish that exists a single emergent theme that characterises all seven shared experiences, apart from the willingness expressed in the questionnaires by the participants to repeat the shared

experience that may be sustainable for the place of direct experience. On the other hand, *it can be noted that each experience favoured the emergence of common emerging themes among the responses of the group of participants, because they were anchored to the peculiarities of certain places or certain external experts.*

In addition, the findings in this study indicate that providing opportunities for students to build relationships and encouraging pragmatic actions are important steps toward cultivating an attitude of care and responsibility towards the places of place-based experiential activities accomplished during the outdoor phase. After stating this, the inductive analysis of the responses highlights the importance played by both particular places and external experts. Beginning with the adventurers, the students expressed how a strong emotional bond had been created between them and Andrea e Davide. *Several students pointed to Davide Ugolini's presence at the Marecchia Oasi Park as the X factor for them to participate in the second shared outdoor experience.* While on the one hand the adventurer's presence at the park could not have favoured different experiential paths than those undertaken, on the other hand it emerges from both the responses and the field notes, *the importance of building a human relationship seen to be constructive and meaningful by the students.* The possibility of cultivating this relationship begun in the indoor phase, and then continued in the outdoor phase, appears to be a recurring theme expressed by the students in order for them to repeat a similar adventurous experience. Several students stated that the Marecchia Oasi Park was the place where they most felt the need to preserve and respect the place, but at the same time another place would have been equally appreciated if there had been the presence of one of the two adventurers.

This profound human relationship was formed during the second indoor experience, continued with reciprocal interviews on where to search for places for experiential activities and strengthened during the outdoor experience. It emerges, therefore, that factors such as *mutual empathy and the ability to build a positive relationship between all participants fosters the desire to repeat the outdoor adventurous experience.* The case concerning the experience at Mutonia, on the other hand, has a different genesis but elements in common with the experience at the Oasi

Park. Mutonia was chosen at the last minute as the place for the students' experience, without knowing Nikki beforehand. It emerges from the students' responses that the artist, who lives in Mutonia, was very skilful in building an empathetic and pleasant relationship in a short time.

During the shared experience and especially when we took part in the art workshop, the exchange of knowledge to build the art objects, how the students were engaged so that everyone could take home an object built in Mutonia, favoured the emergence of a very engaging and sincere relationship between everyone, as stated by those present. In this case, while participants chose Mutonia because of its characteristics and not because of the artist's presence, after the experience it became evident as a common emerging theme that Nikki's presence and her way of engaging students was mentioned as an X factor for participants to want to repeat the experience (pp. 281-284). In addition, several students, as evidenced by the photos, expressed the concept that sustainability can be easily grasped through a direct experience to be undertaken in Mutonia (p. 284). Last, the questionnaires and field notes mention the relationship that was established with the salt workers and students at the Cervia Camillone salt mine. While it emerges that the type of human relationship that was built between the salt workers and the students is different in its nature to that built by the experts Nikki and Davide, at the same time several students stated that the way of doing things, the wisdom expressed for their knowledge and above all a sense of admiration for the type of work they carried out, these elements favoured the building of a direct and meaningful relationship. If these emotional responses were triggered by the building of positive human relationships as reported by the students, the particular characteristics of the outdoor places and the type of experiences that occurred also gave rise to new reflections and considerations on the part of the pupils.

The experience in Mutonia fostered the emergence of a common theme expressed by the participants; this direct experience allowed them to deepen the concept of sustainable human activities and the awareness that every object we buy often ends up in a waste deposit, contributing to a consumerist model that is no longer sustainable. *Many students claimed that the experience led them to reflect on how*

many objects we buy, are not necessary. The experience, students affirmed on their questionnaires, led them to rethink and review their daily habits and how they could behave in a more environmentally sustainable way. In addition, the students expressed the notion that building something, an object, with their own hands from the scraps already there is more satisfying and rewarding than buying it.

Numerous students stated that Mutonia is the right place to understand and deepen the concept of sustainability, particularly sustainable human activity. In addition, many reported that at school the understanding of what sustainable means, what can be sustainable or not, remains an abstract concept. In the questionnaires, participants reflected that only direct experiences, such as the one they experienced in Mutonia, can direct them to change their habits towards more sustainable acting. The experience fostered the emergence of feelings of affection and a desire to repeat the adventurous experience, although some did not always express their liking for the place. Analysis of qualitative data from the direct experience accomplished at the Marecchia Oasi Park highlights other common emerging themes. The purpose of establishing this specific park, as previously outlined in chapter 7, is to defend the biodiversity represented by certain native animal and plant species. The above mentioned place, located on the Marecchia River cycle path, saw in the early 2000s the presence of human activities aimed at defending and preserving the habitat of local flora and fauna: with these motivations, the Marecchia Oasi Park was born (Tinarelli, 2005; Valbonesi et al., 2011). An emerging theme expressed in the participants' responses highlights the fact that after the experience several students felt a desire to preserve the place, to keep it clean and not to pollute or ruin it as a result of their experiential activities that occurred.

Regarding this shared place-based experience, students highlighted in their responses the fact that the experience led them to feel a sense of care and affection for that specific place. Many students emphasised how the peculiarities of the place (the simultaneous presence of animals, lush vegetation and edible wild fruit) fostered in them a concern that their activities would not have a negative impact on the place of the experience. Compared to the other two places of the three shared experiences of

the outdoor phase, this experience reveals the emergence of a a major sense of affection for the place. The same numerical quantitative data expressed in chapter 9 on the slider scales also clearly expresses that this experience was the one that students would most want to repeat while trying to negatively impact the place as little as possible.

It is possible to affirm, after a careful analysis of the responses and photos (pp. 282-284) regarding the experience at the Marecchia Park Oasi, that it was the unique intrinsic characteristics of the place that favoured the emergence of what was stated above: the emergence of a strong sense of care and desire to preserve the place. In addition, another factor favoured the emergence of positive emotional responses and the formation of memorable memories. The direct and spontaneous experience of being able to taste the wild fruit at Parco and being able to compare that taste with that of the purchased fruit. *This unexpected experience, many students argued, encouraged them to think about the quality of the food their families usually buy at the supermarket.* The students immediately noticed the difference in taste when tasting wild fruit; this experience led them to reflect on why this difference existed, which food was healthier and what production process had led two identical foods to have two completely different tastes. The learning-by-tasting experience was repeated at the Camillone Salina, although this experience was less unexpected. From the direct experience that took place at the Camillone salt pan, some common themes emerged from the responses. The students' responses underlined how the concepts of sustainable human activities and biodiversity have become concepts that are no longer abstract, but more comprehensible through direct experience that took place in Cervia.

In this sense, the inductive analysis of the responses from the questionnaires highlights the fact that both the direct experience carried out in Mutonia and the direct experience at the Camillone salt pan, favoured the interpretation of the concept of sustainable human activities. It emerges, however, that the students' observation of the work of the salt workers (and myself on that particular day) fostered an awareness of the meaning of 'sustainable human activity', that is, a human activity that does not pollute while it is being carried out and that does not have a negative effect on the

environment in which people work. Picking up on the concepts expressed by Turrone et al., (2020), *salt workers are an integral part of the saltpans*. This salt pan exists thanks to the activity of the man, whose aim in this case is not to maximise the exploitation of the resources present there, but rather to seek a balance between human activities and the resources present in that place without leading to exploitation or pollution of that specific place (Petrini, 2016, 2023).

These peculiarities were emphasised in the responses given by the students, several of whom stated that only certain places, such as *Mutonia* and *Salina Camillone*, *permit certain abstract concepts to become more tangible*. In addition, after a careful analysis of the responses and photos, only places such as the Marecchia Oasi Park and the Camillone salt pan were conducive to a unique experience: deepening the concept of biodiversity through the tasting of food naturally produced in those places. In particular, the fact that the salt from the Cervia salt pan is a presidio of biodiversity is certified by the fact that the salt pan itself became a Slow-Food presidio since 2004 (<https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/slow-food-presidia/cerviaartisanal-sea-salt>, 2022a). Several students stated that after tasting Cervia salt, they noticed how different it was from the salt they commonly use at home. The fact that salt is an element present in all the students' homes made it possible to make a comparative test between the taste of the salt they already knew at home, and that of Cervia-Camillone salt pan. Since the latter is sweeter, the difference between the salt normally bought and the salt extracted during that day and then tasted was immediately obvious to the students. This direct experience, affirmed the students who wanted to taste the salt, enabled them to grasp the difference between what is an industrial product, and what is a unique product due to its biodiversity.

Furthermore, the telling by the salt workers of the fact that several local foods use Cervia salt to be prepared led many students to reflect that after that experience they would pay more attention to buying local food that uses only Cervia salt. In doing so, this behaviour leads to a change towards a more sustainable attitude as buying local food reduces CO₂ emissions due to transport, as some students intuitively observed after their direct experience in that place. A final common theme expressed

by the students was that many noted that the direct experience they experienced was slow compared to the previous two. This was highlighted by many participants, *as observing the work of the salt workers*, the latter could not be sped up. Student responses reported that the pace of the experience was dictated by the slow pace of human activity.

The students' responses highlight the emergence of a sense of care and affection for the specific places of the activities, but not only the encounter with the places and the interaction with them was the X factor for the emotions and meanings developed. Rather, it is more appropriate to state that it was the interaction between participants, places and experts (of adventure and sustainability/biodiversity) that fostered the emergence of a *sense of affection and care* for the places of place-based experiential activities. In turn, *the particularly empathetic human relationships also contributed to the pupils' bonding to those places through interaction with the people they found in these places*. To conclude the analysis and favour the emergence of final conclusions, the encounter between the places and the pupils, and furthermore the presence of the adventure, sustainability/biodiversity experts and thus the particularly empathetic human relationship created with them, favoured the emergence of an even stronger bond between the participants and the places. In this final section of the conclusions, I outline some final considerations concerning the *methodology* that characterised this research project, highlighting the inherent characteristics of the type of data collection technique. Beginning with data collection, this was mainly based on the use of a questionnaire with one main question and two sub-questions, designed to come as close as possible to the structure of an open interview. Photos and field notes were also used to collect data that might have escaped the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questionnaire is structured in a way that it initially collects quantitative data on a so-called slider scale (Pallotti, 2021, 2022).

Secondly, the same questions are repeated in the second part of the questionnaire in order to acquire qualitative data. The questionnaire was always administered at the end of each experience and the numerical data on the slider scale made it possible to create graphs (chapter 9) that show the trend of the indoor-outdoor

experiences, but above all demonstrate continuing data (Pallotti, 2021). In this research project, therefore, quantitative data introduced qualitative data as mentioned earlier, resulting in an innovative mixed-method design for data collecting. Emerging common themes found in place-based experiential activities were analysed if present at least 15 times out of 21 questionnaires. Secondly, the methodology of displaying qualitative data in Chapters 10 and 11, was based on the creation of 4 bands with the data reported and then spaced between 00>25mm, 25>50mm, 50>75mm, 75mm>100.

For each band, 3 responses with emerging common themes were selected for a possible total of 12 responses. I reported the emerging themes starting with those with the lowest numerical value on the slider scale, and ending by reporting the common emerging themes with the highest numerical value. It is clear from the graphs of the outdoor experiences that the second shared experience had the most positive responses out of the total number of participants present. These were analysed and allowed the analysis of emerging recurring themes: this was done for all seven shared experiences. Special note concerning the mixed method used to collect data during the experiential phases. This need arose in view of the various criticisms that have been directed at the qualitative method as such as it may fail to capture certain dynamics manifested in experiential activities (Smith J.A. et al., 1995; Hall & Howard, 2008; Bortolotti, 2018). In addition, Beames (2010), states that a precise and unequivocal methodology in data collection in outdoor education, has not emerged. Some scholars such as Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, (2006) and Hall & Howard (2008) claim that it is the structure of the mixed method design used during data collection, if it has been well conceived, that allows a clearer relationship between quantitative and qualitative data, and thus a clearer and more extensive interpretation of the final findings.

In addition, it emerges more clearly from the graphs in Chapter 9 of this thesis which experiences the participants would most desire to repeat. These findings, expressed in numbers reported on the slider scales, are then fundamental in Chapters 10 and 11 of this research project. In fact, the common themes that emerged from the questionnaires were reported from the lowest values (e.g. 36 and 42mm) to the fourth band, with values between 75 and 100mm. In doing so, the method used to report the

findings appears to follow a structured logic that is repeated for each experience reported in Chapters 10 and 11. In addition, this methodology produced data that the scholar Pallotti (2021, 2022) considers to be 'continuous' (dati continui) and thus can be studied in the trends that emerged from the first focus group experience to the final shared experience.

Continuing and ending with the final conclusions, the discerning reader can see that the shared outdoor activities of this research project were focused on the need for environmental sustainability (Hill & Brown, 2014). In these last words of the final conclusions, it is appropriate to emphasise and restate the reference points of this research project in outdoor adventure education. This research project was inspired by a flourishing scientific literature within outdoor education that developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s: what type of transformative (place-based) activities would be most appropriate for learners to experience directly for a change towards more sustainable acting?

Within outdoor education, growing bodies of literature have engaged with critical theory/pedagogy related to outdoor practices, e.g. Bell (1997), Martin (1999), Warren and Loeffler (2000) Humberstone and Pedersen (2001), Payne (2002). Other scholars have anchored their work to outdoor practices and sustainability, e.g. Lugg, (2007), Irwin, (2008), Higgins (2009), Hill (2012), Hill and Brown (2014). In addition, other authors have further explored human-nature relationships and deep ecology, e.g. Nicol, (2003) Preston (2004), Sandell and Ohman (2010). Place-based outdoor pedagogical approaches have been further explored by Stewart (2004) and Wattchow and Brown (2011).

For over two decades, authors such as Bowers (2001), Orr (1992, 2004) and Sterling (2001) have increasingly argued for a transformation of self and society that radically alters the foundations of economic, social and political structures, with the aim of achieving sustainability. This research project in outdoor adventure education, *is embedded in this above-mentioned frame*, which began more than 20 years ago. Taking into account the peculiarity mentioned earlier, the types of experiences that

might be offered within outdoor education, in order for them to be transformative towards more sustainable action, have assumed a crucial role in this research project. In addition, according to Hill and Brown (2014), 'we believe it is necessary to examine what is meant by *transformative experiences* and to consider how (environmental) sustainability is understood if we are to frame an appropriate response regarding *the types of experiences that might be offered to our students*' (p. 220).

This research project also took into account a guiding question that characterised outdoor experiential activities within outdoor education in the 2010-2020 decade: 'In what ways can experiences in the outdoors contribute to the transformation of self and society that environmental sustainability calls for?' (Nicol et al., 2012, p. 268). As a consequence of this centrality of the above matter, the places of the outdoor experiential activities were not chosen at random. The importance of choosing specific places in which human activities are sustainable and or in defence of biodiversity, was a deliberate choice in this project so that the type of experiences offered to the students would be transformative through the specifics of the place (s).

Although many educators working in the school system may feel they have little influence on the systems within which they work, this common thinking does not preclude the possibilities for educators to engage students in transformative educational experiences with the goal of achieving sustainability. The type of outdoor experiences proposed in this research were also intended to help participants develop attitudes, skills and knowledge to be active citizens in the transformative project of working for a sustainable future, as hypothesised by scholars such as Kahn (2010) and Sterling (2001, 2010).

Sustainable development and education for sustainability (and biodiversity) was the action-oriented framework for self-transformation that I drew on, on the basis of the work of several authors who have written on these topics (Hill, 2010, 2013; Christen & Schmidt, 2012; Hill & Brown, 2014). The proposed experiential activities were not randomly conceived so that by simply '*experiencing the outdoors*', one would expect a transformative experience moving towards sustainability or greater

awareness of the importance of biodiversity (Hill, 2010, 2013; Hill & Brown, 2014). *It was the deliberate choice of specific places where human activities are sustainable and in defence of biodiversity that attracted the attention of both participants and myself, and directed us to undertake this specific type of transformative experiential activity.*

In brief, to conclude this final phase of this research project, it is useful to note that the findings are multi-layered and reflect the dynamic nature of this research project, which involved an initial indoor phase to introduce the outdoor phase and thus foster opportunities for critical and creative thinking. It also emerged that participants were keen to adopt a multidimensional approach, particularly in the outdoor phase. This required the integration of pragmatic actions of respect for the environment realised through the experiential opportunities, challenge activities, and thus fostering spontaneous learning and quiet moments. In particular, the outdoor experiences, as reflected in the participants' recurring emergent themes, were holistic, meaningful and engaging for the students. I report in this conclusive sections, the quantitative findings concerning the slider scale which shows that in the indoor phase the second shared experience (15 on 19) and the second shared outdoor experience (17 on 21), were considered by the participants as the most meaningful.

Quantitative indoor phase findings from slider scales

First sh-ind-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn: 0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 4 p., 5.0 > 7.5cn: 11. p, 7.5cn>10cn:6

First sh-ind-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn: 0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 0 p., 5.0cn>7.5cn: 4. p, 7.5cn>10cn:15

Sec sh-ind-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn: 0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 0 p. 5.0cn>7.5cn: 8. p, 7.5cn>10cn:13

Third sh-ind-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn: 0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 0 p., 5.0cn>7.5cn: 8. p, 7.5cn>10cn:13

Quantitative outdoor phase findings from slider scales

First sh-out-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn: 0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 0 p., 5.0cn> 7.5cn:7. p, 7.5cn>10cn: 14

Second sh-out-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn:0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 0 p. 5.0cn>7.5cn: 4. p, 7.5cn>10cn: 17

Third sh-out-ex: first strip 0>2.5cn: 0 p., 2.5>5.0cn: 0 p., 5.0cn>7.5cn:7. p, 7.5cn>10cn:13

To conclude, the quantitative data above are clear because they are expressed in numbers fitted in strips and clearly indicate which experiences were (from a quantitative point of view) the most meaningful and which one would like to repeat first. Nevertheless, it is only through the qualitative data from the articulated responses given by the participants through the use of words that I analysed and investigated why the students decided to put a mark on a certain point on the slider scale.

Using the mixed methods design adopted in this research project, with the second phase of data collection through targeted questions (one main question, plus two sub-questions), it is possible to understand why the second indoor shared experience and the second outdoor shared experience were the most relevant. These latter data, would not be deducible through the slider scales on their own. Indeed, it was noticeable that one of the emerging recurring themes in the second indoor shared experience was that several participants expressed an admiration and awe for the adventures narrated by the adventurer. Added to this, an emerging recurring theme was the fact that participants were prompted to seek advice on their own personal adventures that would be undertaken in the second phase of the project and the importance given to mutual interviews between adventurer and participant on finding places to engage in experiential activities. This surprise effect partially disappeared during the shared experience with the second adventurer. Continuing with the final conclusions, however, as far as the second outdoor shared experience is concerned, there were other emerging common themes that allowed this one to be indicated in the quantitative data as the most meaningful (15 out of 21). Emerging common themes saw several participants express factors that were not present in the other responses as there were no such factors in the other experiences.

It is noticeable that almost all participants expressed admiration for the lush nature of the Marecchia Oasis Park, a strong attraction for the animals that were sighted in that place and positive feelings for the presence of an adventurer (Davide) with whom a rather positive mutual human-emotional relationship had been established. In addition, an unexpected event contributed to making this specific

experience at the Oasi Marecchia park, a special direct experience: begin to eat the wild fruit (not subjected to lengthy industrial processing) present in the park and be able to compare the taste they felt with the same fruit bought in the supermarket but subjected to industrial preservation processes.

This direct experience of comparing the fruit that could be eaten at the park with the fruit that one usually buys at the supermarket became a recurring theme noted in the students' responses (in addition to the field notes and photos in chapters 10-11). It emerged that the participants who had such an experience, noticed the difference in taste, asking themselves questions as to why there was a difference in taste and *what reasons were behind this discovery*. An entirely similar experience occurred at the Cervia salt pan, where it was possible to taste the sweet salt of Cervia. In this experience as well, the participants' amazement at the difference in taste between the salt the students are used to consuming at home and the salt they tasted at the Camillone Slow-Food Presidio clearly emerged. In this discovery by the participants, there was a deeper understanding of the concept of biodiversity, which, as stated by the participants during the initial indoor phase of this research project, appeared to be rather abstract and vague without any direct experience to enable its discovery. That stated, it was the common emerging themes from the responses that made it possible to establish an explicit link with the educational design of this research project, relating them to the themes of sustainability and biodiversity. The emerging common themes found in the qualitative data, show how the characteristics of the places (presence of sustainable human activities and or in defence of biodiversity) were fundamental in their peculiarities, so that responses emerged that highlighted the fact that the understanding of what is sustainable and what is biodiversity was made possible by direct experiences in those specific places.

Therefore, it can be stated at this point in this outdoor adventure education research thesis that the place-based transformative experiential activities conducted by the group of participants facilitated the discovery of the meaning of sustainable human activities in defence of biodiversity. Nevertheless, this research project explored an area of research in outdoor education that had left considerable room for

investigation. That is, the realisation of place-based experiential activities, *but only in places where human activities are present, sustainable and in defence of biodiversity*. In addition, by adopting *specific criteria in the choice of outdoor places* for experiential activities (sustainable human activities and or in defence of biodiversity), a common recurring theme emerged in the participants' responses.

Nevertheless, it is fair to mention that it was the particular characteristics of the outdoor places that brought out certain recurring themes found in the participants' responses. At Mutonia, several participants stated that thanks to their direct experience there, they had deepened their understanding of the meaning of sustainable human activities. Several reflected on the fact that from scrap materials, it is possible to obtain useful items for everyday needs. In addition, many expressed that one can have more sustainable behaviour by refitting or repairing objects one already has at home. At the Marecchia Oasis Park, the recurring theme related to the importance of preserving biodiversity emerged from several participants. This was made possible by the intervention of human activities towards the establishment of a park that became a protected area for the repopulation of native animal species, in defence of the biodiversity of local species. In the participants' responses, several stated that they recognised some local protected species through observation of the animals sighted there, comparing them with those on the panels placed in the cages built for observation. In conclusion, only at the Slow-Food presidio in Cervia emerged as a recurring theme that through direct experience in salt-pan, participants deepened and discovered the concept of sustainable human activities and the concept of biodiversity. This was mainly thanks to the activities of observing, sharing the experience with their classmates, interacting with the salt workers, taking part in experiential activities and *learning through tasting* salt and its biodiversity.

It emerges as a final result that the group of participants, therefore, through direct experience discovered and then learnt to distinguish the taste of natural, unprocessed foods (wild fruit from the Marecchia Oasis Park and salt from the Slow-Food Presidio of Cervia) in comparison to those usually bought at supermarkets that offer ultra-processed foods subjected to several industrial processing stages.

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Rimini Middle School*

Oggetto: progetto di ricerca di outdoor adventure education

Io sottoscritto Werther Giannini, nato a Rimini il 26-11-1975, in qualità di studente del 36° ciclo di dottorato dell'università Unimore, comunico che la collaborazione inerente il progetto di ricerca di outdoor adventure education in corso con l'Università Unimore e Reggio Childhood-studies non necessita di ulteriori collaborazioni e/o attività esperienziali (4 attività esperienziali condivise indoor e 3 attività esperienziali condivise outdoor concluse). In merito alle attività che sono state portate a termine, per quanto concerne questo progetto di ricerca dottorale nell'ambito della OAE, porgo un ringraziamento a tutti coloro (dirigente scolastico, studenti, docenti e genitori degli studenti della scuola I.C. Fermi di Viserba) che a vario titolo hanno preso parte alle attività o permesso che tale ricerca di dottorato potesse essere implementato e portato a termine.

Werther Giannini

Rimini 2023



Università degli studi di Modena e Reggio-Emilia

Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione -

Reggio Childhood Studies

Research Project in Outdoor Adventure Education

Thesis submitted by PhD fellow Werther Giannini

Co-supervisor: Professor Mike Brown Associate Professor Outdoor Learning Head of Department, Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau.

Supervisor: professor Bortolotti UniBo

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