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**Social intervention: a strategic-systemic model in loisir events addressed to youth groups**

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**Patrizia Meringolo**

Good day everyone, our presentation this morning refers to an experience we have done within the European Equal projects, those projects designed to promote new forms of enterprises, particularly youth enterprises. The company our project worked with was a body capable of intervening in the sectors of leisure: music events, contextual events, addressed at youth audiences. Thus, the scope of the project regarded lifestyles and juvenile risk behavior particularly those enacted during music events. The university department took care of the underlying exploratory research, of evaluating the educational process and of the experimentation.

Therefore, the aim of our study regards, moving from basic theoretical assumptions, all that concerns high-risk behaviors, use and abuse of legal and illegal substances and, also, events organized by youth groups (we will see why this is important) and ways social workers can intervene.

As we will mention during the presentation, there are recent contributions, by the American Journal of Community Psychology, that offer a systemic reading of these problems... problems which arise in local communities impacted by such great events.

These studies analyze the differences that emerge by moving from a logic of linear causality to a logic of circular causality, regarding both understanding the phenomenon and the intervention.

We here propose a systemic-strategic reading of the data emerged from the research, with the aim of, firstly, underlining the problem's different points of view depending on those who are involved and the differences between the hypothesized situations of risk and those actually lived in those moments. Secondly we intend to find, on the basis on these elements, which interventions can determine a change.

Let's start from the research:

Participants.

- The qualitative research was based on 25 semi-structured interviews and 9 focus groups conducted with people directly involved with planning, carrying out, managing and verification of events targeted at youth audience.
- The quantitative research was composed of 452 subjects with average age of 22.5 years, half males and half females, all living in Tuscany. This research takes into consideration a sample from Tuscany because our project was based in Tuscany, nonetheless, from parallel research we know that this can be exemplary of juvenile situation and indicative of research for best practices.

The research instruments have been expressly designed.

Interviews and focus group have been analyzed with the Atlas.TI software, which gives us a computer assisted qualitative survey; statistical elaborations have been conducted on the questionnaire data.

These are some qualitative results that refer to the first part of the research.

If we look at security, a common problem nowadays, we can analyze different perspectives, therefore, how each social actor sees the issue of social security.

In this first slide you can see how young people define a safe event. The software allows us to see the most recurring codes in the interviews and also exact quotations of the interviewees. Young people define a secure evening as a good evening, where they had fun and they returned home safe (therefore they also take responsibility for their well-being). They also mention the context: a limited number of people, emergency exits... the unsafe evening is that where the place doesn't allow a to enjoy the event. So they see as secure something that is both pleasurable and healthy for themselves.

Of course social workers, instead, give us a more complex elaboration. They deal with emergency aspects and physical environments, including other phenomena to which is necessary to pay attention: particular groups of young people that require special attention and the relationships with other people: police, security, etc... therefore social workers think of security as something structured by several actors.

Local entities envision security as a problem that can arise from substance abuse. As it happens in parallel events, such as the Italia Wave camping ground, the Pistoia Blues or Arezzo Wave, considered to be problematic contexts, the main issues regarded mobility, therefore their vision of security is connected to a context and also shows the need of moments of control. Some say that security problems are actually less than what we would expect, at least the real ones.

Those who organize concerts see a secure event as something which is not dangerous, partially in relation to what happens or doesn't happen.

Even more, club and pub managers (the interviews include many different topics, for this presentation we have purposely selected issues that highlight the different points of view) see security as something regarding the environment, therefore, having all required safety

measures, metal detector, police forces, training of the security... the general idea is lesser inclined towards of a safety for participants, of participants or involving participants.

Volunteers who work on ambulances are always a great resource and keep suggesting the need for a stronger coordination with other people, volunteers on ambulances are used to intervene where there is a need for coordination. They often have a strong desire to network between the health, social and leisure aspects of the event and they obviously have a perspective related to the emergency they are called to intervene on.

Local police, we have interviewed the town hall police, is linked to local institutions and therefore represents a structure on which we can intervene. They tell us some interesting things: how events impact on local community and become problematic when they influence residential areas... they see the emergency situation connected to the type of people involved. They also see epiphenomena as noise, traffic, fights, garbage. They also told us how dangerous can be what the media says of the event and of problematic situations.

Why is this list so important? Because we are trying to show you how there can be extremely different points of view on the same event.

Here some data on quantitative analysis to show how emergencies described by the media can be different from how they are portrayed by those who directly lived them.

So the use of alcohol exists.

The use of substances in reality is within the national medium, and if we look at the substances that are most used, there are those called recreational, thus, legal such as alcohol, illegal such as cannabis, but present within contexts and in a measure that doesn't constitute an emergency.

If we look at the young people interviewed in a quantitative analysis, we notice that a major part of those participating are part of a cluster of low risk, and the high risk cluster is reduced. If we look at how the clusters are with regard to some phenomenon declared as constituting a risk, we notice how in reality they constitute themselves in a foreseeable manner and in which the high risk is limited and the high risk, here we are talking of proximity to the substances, not of abuse... of experimenting.

The young people interviewed were all part of all contexts including interviews carried out in contexts such as raves, or in contexts which were legal, such as concerts. In reality the real emergencies are dangerous situations such as driving which is really the thing in which the group at medium risk has a significant presence, it is much more reduced, situations of driving which are associated with the use of substances, to which the high risk group is associated with.

So, before handing over the words to Moira, the meaning of this data coming from research is:

- First point: seeing before intervening how different actors read the same problem.
- Second point: seeing within the problem of safety if the hypothesized emergencies have an objective occurrence and it seems to us that often the construction of the deviance is overabundant compared to the same transgressive experiences.

Now, over to Moira, on our systemic-strategic considerations.

### **Moira Chiodini**

The part that I am going to deal with, refers to the elements that we have as knowledge compared to the more operational knowledge. It has been stressed in recent days as we also explore how new ways of solutions in a systemic strategic approach, results from research and from an area, from a cognitive-operative structure that is the one that has been presented, but also like working in these contexts reveals new knowledge that allows us to calibrate intervention in a better manner.

So I will refer to what has been observed working together with social workers, I shall refer mainly to a specific context for this for a moment, an area which is within the great festival. I say this because the work within these specific contexts of entertainment, moves the attention even in regards to problems in as much as it is as if we had the possibility to observe the phenomenon of risk related to the use of substances as if they were really under a magnifying glass, as if we have a microscope and could we could see in a very amplified manner problems related to the risk.

Before getting into detail, some specifications, in fact, compared to our methods of reading and I refer to, and I do it very quickly seeing as it is a shared wealth of knowledge, the characteristics that we consider significant and important to set the action, thus: to consider how the context, primarily as a system and then the emerging characteristics of this system does not depend on the individual parts but how the various parts are interrelated.

So the first thing to do is to understand what kind of system we have, to understand how successfully we can individuate the logic that we can implement for the intervention. The other key aspect, as anticipated by Professor Meringolo, is that we are faced with different ways of reading by the different stakeholders, or community interventions, we are dealing with a range of social actors who have different modalities of reading the phenomenon associated with different objectives and with consequent arrangements for dealing with the issues in different and often conflict with each other. So we must take into account the subjectivity of interpretation and here we are in aid from the epistemological point of view the whole theory of constructivism and in particular radical constructivism.

The importance of this approach is underlined by the various theoretical contributions that we are on this level compared to international intervention in community psychology. On this I'll go a little faster. What is being emphasized at international level is the importance of moving from a linear type of logic, hence the fact that the majority of the actors involved, have the idea that focusing on a specific aspect of the problem and applying the solution we will obtain the desired effect. In fact we see that it is not like this, it is emphasized that the system is characterized by interdependence of variables... we can create change in a part of it, however, this may lead to the desired effect only if the elements and the relations which constitute them are modified. So this means that a modification of a part of the system doesn't necessarily lead to the desired change.

In our case, identifying the relevant elements of the system means taking into account various aspects, which are much more complex, such as political aspects, such as social aspects, such as cultural aspects.

I shall be hastier on this part because I want to later concentrate on specific cases.

The other theory that is very important that is underlined concerns the nature of change and especially stresses the importance of Watzlawick's theories between Type 1 changes and Type 2 changes. This is because, as we have observed, the work of social workers, for example, that sometimes constitutes excellence, could risk to trigger changes which are exclusively type 1, hence, there are some very good interventions, but they aren't able to modify the systems assumptions.

The other important thing is that, as underlined in the famous book "Change", by Watzlawick, Watzlawick and Fish, the fact that the type 2 change is a change difficult to achieve, this does not mean it is impossible, because as they say, it often occurs to see people that manage to find new solutions, social organisms are capable of selfcorrection and nature always finds new adaptations and the whole process of scientific discovery and artistic creation consists in exiting an old structure to then enter into a new one.

This for us is very significant because within these contexts we have seen this happen, or groups that have managed to change the background of the system: for example, young people who have changed the system from the host area (that we will see, isn't in effect hosting) of large festivals, such as unsafe places and substance abuse in places where they could instead promote and show their skills.

Let's look at the intervention.

As I was saying before this is our observation of the interventions put in place within these contexts and therefore it is not a predefined intervention that has been carried out, but an accompaniment of social workers who made us think about how to yet more implement the functionality of the interventions.

To better contextualize we say that we are within a context of great dimension which is attractive to a diverse type of young people and particularly there are young people with strong anti-institutional ideologies. What I mean, there are young people who show through their verbal and nonverbal behavior a total rejection of standards and rules, for example, ripping up their identity card, refusing to go to the emergency room rather than to other services because they do not accept whatever is constituted and regulated. Alongside this there are deviant behaviors, thus the use of legal and illegal substances. Within these major events often there are areas which are created in which a sort of parallel manifestation is created, and these are areas that understandably create more problems for local authorities and operators because they are the most out of control.

What happens within these contexts? For the analysis that we have carried out and to give a better understanding we will carry out this kind of survey making reference to the structure with four stages of MRI, therefore, the definition of the problem, the analysis of attempted solutions, the definition of objectives and strategies for change.

As was said the problem definition leads to different perspectives of the various actors involved in this. The interesting thing is that if we have a different perspective this may be a resource rather than a limit. That is not always a limit, in that it can happen, as it happens, we face the complementary positions, or by a part who sees the problem and another part who sees the same situation as if already beyond the problem, no longer seeing it as problematic. If we make a comparison, we compare it to what happens in clinical, it is as if we had the opportunity to see the patient when the problem is inside, thus tells you what the problem is and their perspective related to this problem, it's the moment in which the problem has already been resolved. Using the technical metaphor of the ladder, it's as if he were at both point zero and point ten.

A practical example: if the situation, which is one that we are facing, is of having many young people of varied typologies, that for example use sound, for the police who see the problem, then we place them at point zero not because they are at point zero but because they see the problem that exists, it's a problem regarding public order. For social workers, who do not see the problem, it is a possibility of working with young people. Obviously it's not a question of who is in the wrong or who is in the right, but rather we can use it to identify the paths of change. For example, we may propose to the social workers, who see this perspective, to become promoters of this initiative and this allows us to move from a

completely self-managed situation to a situation which is completely out of control to one which is under control. I shall try to be quicker.

The same thing goes for the definition of the objectives: we have different goals, often topical, often at odds with each other. For example, the police force try to prevent illegal phenomena, whereas for social workers, instead the objective is that the illegal phenomena, for example related to the use of substances be visible in order to intervene.

Regarding the importance of redefining the objectives I recommend the book, which I think is explained very well, by Prof. Nardone and Roberta Milanese, "La terapia dell'azienda malata", which although takes into account another context, defines this procedure very well.

Thus the importance is to reach a redefinition of the objective, and for example, in a job with a local authority who wants to prevent some young people especially the more unconstitutional, thus problematic, to reach the city, emerges as the real objective may be to diminish the complaints from the citizens. This redefinition, again, gives us pathways towards change, for example, a set of actions that anticipate the complaint through, for example, interviews with citizens, especially privileged witnesses, or by creating a direct reference point for that criticality before it transforms into a problem by using for example the social mediation.

So we use already existing social tools, but in a diverse logic.

On the attempted solutions, what we have seen, is that the usual attempted solution is the increase of social control. It'll go faster. The increase of social control within these contexts often leads to what Watzlawick defines an escalation, that the greater control over certain groups who do not like control, this increases the deviance and shifts further more towards illegality.

So on techniques, we have said:

- The restructuring regarding the redefinition of the problem;
- The making visible instead of hiding, that is use a reverse logic. Instead of moving the more controllable places that then become the places where they selforganize themselves or certain types of behavior increase they should be reinserted into the official places so that I can acquire a greater possibility of intervention.
- Unleash control to regain control, or use within these contexts, the logic of small disorder that maintain order. Or, I can differentiate and say on certain things, I can be versatile and differentiate even behaviors, however, in other circumstances I become more rigid.

What I want to emphasize is that the logic, the intervention that has proved crucial, however unconscious on the part of social workers is to reduce the problems by working on resources. So shifting the perspective from the problem to the resources, in a resource-oriented, and solution oriented logic, it has come to form a virtuous cycle rather than promotion of resources and reduction of risk behavior. That is within these contexts, which

are also very destructured phenomena or proactive behavior by young people have emerged, useful, and beginning working on these, they have started to increase, began to increase participation and collaboration, then the logic is reversed between the control and output control, so much so that there was a restructuring and these young people from substance consumers but even event goers, then became the owners and organizers, and have also begun to first-person take on the responsibility of the behavior for themselves and for others, thus the logic is reversed. The logic has been inverted so much so from this experience a project originated that the professor spoke about previously, of creating a social enterprise made by young people, peers, and social workers, with the aim of event promotion and health prevention.

Thank you.