

Roberta Raimondi & Mario D'Agostino – KAMALEONTE (Italy)

Historical background of Adventure Therapy in Italy

In Italy Adventure Therapy is still a developing field and it is not widespread yet. There is few academic research on this matter, and few experiments, most of them related only to *mountain-therapy* (G. Scoppola. The term was used for the first time in the pages of the magazine "Famiglia Cristiana", in September 1999). It's an original therapeutic-rehabilitative and socio-education approach aimed for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of individuals with problems, illnesses and disabilities through trekking, long walks in nature and climbing (from www.montagnaterapia.it). These programs are designed to take place through group dynamics, in the cultural, natural and artificial mountain setting. The intervention areas might be different, although most of them are in the health sector.

Those which concern implementations on mental health in particular, have turned to people with drug addictions and people with mental and physical disabilities. We also find in Italy programs dedicated to partially sighted or blinded people, focused on the sensory dimension of experience (S. Carpineta, 2010). Currently mountain therapy groups are present in various regions. The north of Italy is a very active driving force for this approach.

'The mountain' in these programs becomes a living space, a laboratory for "new" ways of being in the world: this setting, this new context, different from the usual, can help build a new inner structure (N. G. De Toma, 2012).

In the health sector there are also rehabilitation programs for areas such as cardiology, eye problems, oncology etc. There is one interesting project regarding a mini-residential-camp of "cardiology mountain therapy" (G. Scoppola, 2004). This approach tends to increase, through residential sessions, where the sense of self-worth and self-efficacy of the participants are the main focus.

In the social sector we find more therapy-mountain routes dedicated to young people with fewer opportunities or troubled teens groups, or used as a means for social integration (programs for immigrants, etc).

The most difficult thing in Italy is to bring together the “worlds” as distant as health/institutions, social and mountains/outdoor activities. With the advent of the mountain-therapy were born some collaborations between local health authorities and the Alpine Club, social cooperatives, voluntary associations and other stakeholders, which required the use of formal instruments such as agreements, common programming etc. But this is a work in progress and there should still be made some other important changes.

Another kind of therapy in nature is *Underwater Psychology*. In Italy the first conference on scuba diving psychology took place in Mestre-Venezia, in 2000, and was organized by Salvo Capodiecì, member of the Doctors, Psychotherapists Association of Venice.

The field of the group's interest focuses on scuba diving, and covers topics such as motivational dynamics by diving into the deepness of emotional problems facilitated through the underwater experience, underwater applications of problems, in particular rehabilitation, educational and learning problems. The research explored the theme of the evocative and metaphorical powerful dimension of diving, which strongly binds to the exploration issues of the inner individual worlds (G. Venza, 2006).

The underwater psychological research that emerged from these contributions is relevant to the diving safety, guidelines for the instructors training, but also as a field of theoretical exploration about the knowledge of mental functioning, here knowable within a particular size but not disconnected with the ordinary life experience.

Some of the most significant Italian organizations or sectors that offer Adventure Therapy programs are:

- Association “Il Cerchio”, from Milan, in collaboration with A.I.F.A. Onlus, that uses a mix of experiences between sports activities in nature (hiking, climbing, archery, hiking and camping), judo and group psychotherapy to treat ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Through residential summer camps with therapeutic purposes this organization aims to increase social support and improve children’s relational attitudes.

- The Underwater Psychology, treatment through underwater. This program includes diving and other water activities like snorkelling, kayaking, stand up paddle, scuba diving, diving, etc. The underwater psychology techniques are used also in some kind of rehabilitation processes.
- “Sentieri di libertà” (freedom trails) of Salute mentale Sardegna (an ASL of Southern Sardinia): a community psychotherapy lab, which represent a living metaphor of a psychiatric model that sees the community as the place to care, to address and resolve mental illness and regain a new sense of belonging (A. Cones, 2015). This laboratory was born in a rehabilitation institute for psychotic patients as an itinerant conference that allows patients to experience, on body and mind, the community sense of "ancient people" who had lived in these hills and, together with specialists, addresses mental health issues. By using activities such as hiking; festivals; music; shared dinners; four days sessions, and trekking, this psychiatric laboratory is providing therapy for mental illness.
- Kamaleonte is an eco-sport organization that since 2004 promotes wellness, individual and group development. Through outdoor, sportive and adventure activities Kamaleonte offers several different kinds of Adventure Therapy and Experiential Learning programs for children, young people and adults.

In conclusion: the outdoors as a therapeutic frame is still not so widespread in Italy but the last few years something started to change. A network started that is helping the dissemination and, hopefully, is adding more small pieces to the big puzzle.

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Adventure Therapy Europe

www.montagnaterapia.it

<http://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/montagna-terapia-un-sentiero-che-cura.aspx>

www.amionlus.it

www.kamaleonte.org

<https://www.facebook.com/Salute-Mentale-Sardegna>

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