



This paper is taken from

*Identities and Citizenship Education: Controversy, crisis and challenges. Selected papers from the fifteenth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Academic Network*

London: CiCe 2013

**Edited by Peter Cunningham**  
**Technical Editor: Angela Kamara and published in London by CiCe,**  
**ISBN 978-1-907675-20-1**

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Chistolini, S. (2013) 'Solidarity and active citizenship learned from a natural disaster: the school experience after the May 2012 earthquake in Italy', in P. Cunningham (ed.) *Identities and Citizenship Education: Controversy, crisis and challenges*. London: CiCe, pp. 385 – 398.

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This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

This is taken from the book that is a selection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe administrative team at London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The Lifelong Learning Programme and the personnel of the Education and Culture DG of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

## **Solidarity and active citizenship learned from a natural disaster: the school experience after the May 2012 earthquake in Italy**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper presents part of a larger research on the consequences of an earthquake on the scholastic life of children aged 3-11. In May, schools abruptly closed due to the earthquake in Emilia Romagna and Lombardy. Children and teachers fled from them, leaving school backpacks and books in the classrooms. Daily life was disrupted and the community gathered in tents set up by civil defence. Immigrant families returned to their countries of origin or shared life in the tent cities. The theoretical sources of the research were mostly composed of the latest international studies on natural disasters and education, focussing especially on: the vulnerability of the persons concerned (Gaillard and Navizet); measures for risk reduction (Hagelsteen and Becker); environmental sustainability (Aksan and Çelikler; Radulescu; Fekete); community resilience (Joerin, Shaw, Takeuchi and Krishnamurthy); controversial human development between freedom of the person and economic globalisation (Jafarzadeh and Beheshti; Abdel-Hadi). Our interviews with teachers, school rectors and citizens revealed the impact of the earthquake on community life, the political role of institutions, the social action of volunteer groups, the commitment of the fire department, the capacity of teachers to turn the disaster from an experience of total loss and destruction to the desire for personal and social rebirth, and the exemplary courage displayed by children well-trained in the evacuation drills prepared by the schools. Earthquakes can cause a loss of community identity and simultaneously be a time of active citizenship through educating to the reconstruction of the local historic memory. For every house sucked down by the earth a plan for living is reborn, a sign of how misfortune can trigger unexpected human solidarity and a responsible participation in the recovery of daily life. The production of a video and the workshops with students were parts of the research in interaction.*

**Keywords:** *School experience, natural disaster, education, solidarity, active citizenship*

### **Introduction**

Earthquakes have made up part of Italian history since ancient times. In 63 B.C. Cicerone talked about the earthquakes in Umbria in his *Catilinarie* and Tacitus remembered that houses collapsed in central Italy as a result of earthquakes (Tozzi, 2005, p. 215). Letters by Pliny the Younger told about the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. that destroyed several towns, among which were Pompeii and Herculaneum. Although documental archives are available that hand down precious evidence of what happened during the various catastrophes, there is little information about the

children, schools or education. Narrations about what was happening to the children and how children viewed the earthquake are almost non-existent and recordings about the effects of the earthquake on schools and educational process are equally scarce. In order to partially fill up the pedagogic void in the study concerning the impact of earthquakes on the significant processes of childhood and on the teaching culture, a survey was carried out in an Italian area hit by the 2012 earthquake: Emilia Romagna and Lombardy. This paper examines the subject of natural disasters and education according to three levels of analysis and conclusions, which reveal the joint concept of solidarity and active citizenship.

The first level concerns critical thinking on some contributions, in which the subject of natural disasters and education was compared, with reference to the psychological state of the persons who lived through the event and the social, political and economic implications that emerged as a consequence of the catastrophe, also paying attention to controversial factors concerning the sustainable development and freedom of the person endangered by the rules of the globalised market.

The second level of analysis concerns research in areas of the earthquake in Italy; this level has a local character and presents the first results of the research carried out in places of the earthquake in Italy for the purpose of understanding what happened in the imaginations of the children and care of the teachers, the community and social context, we also refer about methodology.

The third level is crucial, since it revives classical studies on earthquakes: by Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant with the intention of focussing the basic problem concerning the debate of the rapport between nature and science, asking oneself about the reasons for the catastrophe and indicate the human paths for getting away from the state of destruction. Children gave their explanations.

Finally, the conclusions emphasise the relationship that joins the three levels and discuss how, from a pedagogical and educational point of view, scientific understanding of the natural disaster is accompanied by the social capacity of positive interaction among persons, who create a cultural and significant symbolic space for life, in which human solidarity is the testimony of active citizenship.

### **1. Aspects of the contemporary research**

Studies were selected from international and national literature on both the subject of ND and E, which more directly lead into consideration of the problematic aspects due to the consequences of disasters on the people's lives (Gaillard and Navizet 2012; Lannes, 2013) and the political measures required to prevent similar catastrophes (Hagelsteen and Becker 2012). In the field of prevention, there are studies that emphasise the importance of creating sustainable environments so as to live without danger or where the damages caused by the catastrophe can be limited (Aksan and Çelikler, 2012; Radulescu, 2012; Fekete, 2012). The prospect of reinforcing the capacities of the population affected to withstand the disaster avails itself of programmed actions and education to the proper conduct when faced with events like earthquakes (Joerin et al, 2012). Evacuation drills in schools, with

knowledge about the rules to follow in the event of an earthquake, represent a significant aid to the schools and community, living under risk conditions (Filogrosso, 2011).

Issues of an existential nature, however, concern the dilemma between human development, balanced between the priorities of the person, and needs for economic growth, a dilemma resolved on the plane of extension of educational opportunities. An increase in education is correlated with the freedom of growth of the person. In a remark about the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP), Jafarzadeh and Beheshti (2012, p. 325) point out

human development means process of expanding human choices by enabling the people to utilize life in long term, healthily and constructively. According to the above definition, human development includes three main components of long life with health, education and access to resources which determine suitable standard for life of people. Other dimensions such as actual choice are raised in these fields which reply on freedom of human being.

The concept of developing freedom is taken up again by Amartya Sen and is relevant to our study on active citizenship fulfilled by human solidarity, which, in the words of Jafarzadeh and Beheshti (2012, p. 327) means reciprocal help as an act of freedom:

Amartya Sen describes concept of capabilities for explaining freedoms and its importance in human development. Capability in vocabulary of Sen means the people enjoying major freedoms which permit them to proceed a kind of life and to have some reasons such as social performance, fundamental education, better health care and life in order to regard it valuable. In this regard, enjoying basic freedoms is the requirement of honorable life of the human being who has regarded reason as his life essence. Amartya Sen says that freedoms are not only basic goals of development, but also they are main tools of development. This attitude (development as freedom) is agent oriented attitude not patient oriented attitude and the persons with enough chances can form their destiny and help each other.

In anthropological terms, culture condenses human experience into forms of representation that are meaningful to the local community

cultural anthropologists most commonly use the term 'culture' to refer to the universal human capacity and activities to classify, codify and communicate their experiences materially and symbolically (Abdel-Hadi, 2012 p. 12).

During natural disasters, the formation of new ties of solidarity among persons enriches the culture with meanings that create trust and security. This effect is especially important for childhood that needs a new experience of building up after

having lived through that of destruction. Children understand how the concept of time is related to things: the short duration of the earthquake compared to the lengthy time of reconstruction.

## **2. Natural disaster and education**

The earthquake in Emilia Romagna and Lombardy call the attention of educationalists and the civil society back to the problem of awareness of the profound effect that natural disasters have on the lives of children and even threaten their existential rhythm. This subject is dealt with systematically in international literature and, particularly, on Eastern Asia. After the great earthquake in Japan on 11 March 2011, various scientific studies were carried out in order to examine the impact of the event on the educational system. Nuclear accidents, such as Fukushima, represent a sector connected to the subject of disasters and the repercussions of such events on the lives of persons, families, cities and countries, hit so suddenly and catapulted into an unknown reality.

The trembling of the earth shakes the existence of everyone, particularly children who may find themselves alone, lost, without loved ones or ties, no longer safe and without being able to envisage the day after with the usual daily routine.

Natural disasters destroy homes and schools, break up the social fabric in which the person lived, alter human relations and make survival a factor dependent on the volition of outside observers. Many recorded documentations show how schools that have not been destroyed can be used as places for gathering people who have lost their homes, and how the resumption of normal attendance of activities requires years of reconstruction and recovery intervention. In some cases, children deprived of school do not return to the classes they knew and the composition of the groups is newly organised and uncertain, instilling in them a sense of deferment of the stability that once existed.

Natural disasters cost the lives of both teachers and children and the barest memory remains of them. The press talks a lot about the collapse of the school of San Giuliano di Puglia and the deaths of 27 children and teachers, following the earthquake in Molise on 31 October 2002; this sad event is periodically recalled. The earthquake of Molise and that of L'Aquila in 2009 are still among the tales of those who experienced them and their effects on education are being scientifically studied.

## **3. Objectives of the pedagogical project**

The first objective of the project was to know what happened to the education of the children during and after the earthquake in Emilia Romagna and Lombardy. In an area where schools have been destroyed, houses have collapsed and the community has been scattered, the education of the children was given a new direction, in some cases guided by the intervention of the educational system, and in other cases left to the initiative of individuals and good will of those who were there alongside the children.

The second objective was to make available to the local community the teaching skills needed to promote initiatives for preventing the existential damage caused to children by the earthquake. A natural disaster is experienced as loss, insecurity, isolation, mistrust and abandonment. In order to counter this, the task force intended to be there, to create times of togetherness, safety, group and community interaction, trust and solidarity, a positive exchange of values, and a positive sharing of visions of life.

The third objective was to collect documentation for scientific use in order to study the relationship between pedagogy and natural disasters, so as to be able to systematically illustrate the effects of the earthquake on the childhood development processes.

The fourth objective was the starting up of intergenerational communication through practices of active citizenship that take advantage of the creation of times of community participation. Books, literature, narratives and the creative imagination of children, criss-crossed with the real tale of life by adults make up the content and means for building up the value of being, projected on the present and future.

The fifth objective was that of educating to reflective thinking, as a time of common growth regarding the values that unite the persons in a community who lived through the earthquake.

#### 4. Methodological structure

The research concerned children in pre-school, elementary school and middle school considered in their community context in the sense of discovering the creation of a positive social life based on solidarity of all peoples.

The method used is called *Multiple Interaction Team Education*, M.I.T.E, that is, a multiple interaction of an organised group in step with on-site operative units, in observance of the ethic of responsibility of scientific action. The scientific origin of the method is based on the studies of the cultural meaning of community (Dilthey, 1914, p. 152), the symbolic interactionism from Dewey (1938) to Denzin (1970, p. 259-284) and the recent epistemological organisation of the thought (Plummer, 2012, p. 27). Our research can be situated according to the description given in the third line of table 1: phenomenology, ethnography, cultural studies, everyday life.

**Table 1: The multiple affinities of symbolic interactionism thought**

Aristotelian	Simmel and formalism	Narrative theory	Verstehen
Anarchist	Grounded theory	Romanticism	Pirandello and drama
Phenomenology	Ethnography	Cultural Studies	Everyday life
Existentialism	Dramaturgy	Communication studies	Micro sociology

Pragmatism	Accounts , absurd and Vocabularies of Motive	Stoicism	Sociological social psychology
Formalism	Weber	Neo-Pragmatism/Rorty	Embodiment
Humanism	Action theories	Humanistic	Negotiated order theory
Self	Ethnomethodology	Qualitative	Iowa School & TST
Identity	Conversational Analysis	Social constructionism	Textual theories
Postmodernism/post-structuralism	Neo-Iowa	ANT (Actor network theory)	Performance methods

‘Based on Plummer, 2012, p. 27’

The earthquake (phenomenology) has been investigated collecting testimonies (ethnography) from teachers, children, adults living in the community (cultural studies) where the disaster occurred (everyday life). Specific aim of the research was to find out the main concept of active citizenship in the specific situation: solidarity was the condition of defending children in the situation of fear and trauma produced by the earthquake. The experience of helping each other was a remarkable way how to be active citizens teaching and learning suitable responses to overcome the common disaster.

The information was gathered through informal talks with children and adults concerning:

- A description of the moment of the earthquake
- Actions following the earthquake
- The current living situation
- Expectations over the coming months

The talks started from the recorded memory of what happened, through narrations, thoughts, diaries, sketches, photographs and videos.

##### 5. The task force

Adhering to the project were the Region of Lazio, the Comunità Montana (Mountain Community), Banks, the Academic Network CiCe, *Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe*, and the CiCea, *Children's Identity and Citizenship European Association*. Collaborating were: Carabinieri, teachers, driver of the school bus, school collaborator, person in charge of the sports and recreation centre, voluntary groups, friends and various persons who agreed to be interviewed.

Each person talked about his/her experience of the earthquake, by narrating what he/she noted in the children and trying to recall phrases, reactions, feelings and reasons the children used to describe their experience.

The registrations allowed for understanding at least three aspects of major pedagogic import. The first aspect concerns the relationship between knowledge of the territory and scientific preparation of citizenship and can be summarised in the expression 'we suddenly became a highly seismic area'.

The second aspect concerns the competence of the school in the preparation towards facing natural disasters like earthquakes, this being deduced from the capacity of the teachers to lead the children outside in an orderly manner and move away from the school building without causing a panic.

The third deals with the value of the living documentation gathered from the community during and after the quakes; this aspect refers to the signs of the concerted preparation of everyone to save themselves and others, comfort and offer examples of active citizenship.

## **6. Knowledge of the territory and scientific preparation of citizenship**

After the earthquake in May, Emilia became a highly seismic area. Silvia relates:

We always talked about how lucky we were because we weren't close to the sea, so no tidal waves. Never an earthquake! We went from zero to *highly seismic*, how could that happen so suddenly? That can't be good! A geologist made an example of a bucket that contains a rock on top of wet sand; if you tap the bucket, what happens? Wet sand holds up the rock, but if you tap on the bucket, the rock slips downward. The sand moved and the rock slipped down, that's how things look here. Who's tapping Emilia, our flatland? This has been happening for about thirty years. Suddenly, craters started appearing, like in Dallas, Texas, craters everywhere; if you go to Concordia you can still see some on the right. Do you fill the emptiness with liquid nitrogen? Nature didn't make it like that. It doesn't remove the blood and replace it with wine. It doesn't work!

Franco describes the earthquake like this:

The strangeness of this earthquake was that sludge rose from the subsoil, the mud raised the floors of houses and came in. They said it was due to the swamps. But nothing like it has ever happened here, not even crevices have ever been of such proportions. Once it was said that this was not a seismic area, but it is, like and even more than others. This ground is not firm; there will be other more serious quakes. I think something big is shifting. The people here are upset, even if they are trying to recover and want to start again.

The literature on earthquakes in Italy states that Emilia Romagna is classified as an area at a lower percentage of hydrological risk than regions in Southern Italy. The areas in Italy at most risk are those of the Aeolian Islands (North of Sicily), the Tyrrhenian side of Calabria and Eastern Sicily (Tozzi, 2005, pp. 50-51).



### 7. The competence of the school

Many people mentioned how the behaviour of the children, especially those in pre-schools and considering their ages, was praiseworthy. On that 29<sup>th</sup> of May, when the quake of 9:00 hit, all of the children followed the instructions of the teachers and school personal and, without crying or panicking, arranged themselves in an orderly manner in the schoolyard. They were sure of their movements, and careful to remember what they had learned during evacuation drills carried out previously on May 20<sup>th</sup>. No shyness, no fear.

They knew what to do and the best way to do it. Monica, one of the persons, who flanked the teachers that morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>, to help the children leave the building, remembers: ‘The persons in charge led the evacuation procedures. The children in the playground started playing and the teachers were able to distract them’.

Fear arrived with the parents and relatives, who came rushing to pick up their children and grandchildren. The adults were barely able to control their feelings of panic, caused by the rumbles and quakes. Paolo Giordano, Marshall of the Novi Carabinieri, observes: ‘Some days before, at school, evacuation drills had been performed and the children were already outside when we arrived’.

### 8. The community experience

Marshal Giordano describes the feeling with these words:

I felt as though we were under a real attack! People were coming to us with all kinds of questions. You have to smile, you can't cry. I didn't see any scenes of panic. Just a few parents anxious about their children, because they didn't know what was happening at the school. We have to convince everyone to stay outside their homes. Convince them not to listen to rumours. During those days, it was difficult to persuade people to return to normality. People were saying ‘a scale-9 quake is coming’, or there was looting. We replied to all calls. We tried to convince people to stay calm.

The help of the Fire Department was also very much appreciated and a common voice expressed recognition for what was done to make the buildings safe and remove everything possible from the homes. The *ANESER* sports centre picked up a fascinating work created by pre-schoolers during playground activities in July. The clock tower that collapsed due to the earthquake was quickly reconstructed by the little planners of excellent architectural solutions. A T-shirt was also created, with the writing *Aiom balèa basta!*, which, in local dialect, means ‘We've danced enough!’. The clock tower is becoming the symbol of Novi, just like in every country, one finds testimonies to be recovered and kept alive, clinging to what is now part of a collective history of so many communities.

### 9. Nature, religion and science

During the Middle Ages, earthquakes were considered a local, causal, natural event that could be anticipated by the passing of a comet across the sky and not totally explained by science. Within this context, the magical and astrological beliefs of the origin and nature of earthquakes led the population to submit to the catastrophe as a scourge and resign themselves, trying to ward off the danger through prayer and processions. Various academics agree in saying that the birth of modern science, starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward, was owed to the revival of Aristotle, that is, the study of strict analytical methods for processes, using the most rational instruments of investigation (Figliuolo, 1988, pp. 68-69).

Over the next centuries, the balance between religious reference and scientific explanation continued to be debated by intellectuals. In particular, the 2012 earthquake in Italy brought to mind the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 by two analogies as to the how and why of similar events. There are still two questions under consideration by experts and the population:

- how is it explained?
- can it be foreseen?

The questions broach the issue of the relationship of nature, religion and science. One expects science to reveal the majority of mechanisms through which nature shows itself to man. Nonetheless, an unexpected earthquake demonstrates how forecasts hardly ever manage to foresee a catastrophic event. The call to faith in Providence to keep such a disaster away is part of the psycho-social defence actions of part of the population, in addition to being a moment of trust in the Divine.

Intervening with different remarks on the same problem were Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant, a sign of a way of thinking of the intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment, who had no choice but to appeal to reason to explain the tragedy by referring to religion and physical-geological knowledge. How to reconcile the presumed goodness of God with these facts? Do we perhaps have to conclude that everything that exists is good and that the cause of bad comes from Providence? So, what is the cause of bad: God or man's irresponsibility?

In 1755 Voltaire examined the Pope's axiom 'All's well' and wrote the 'Poem on the Lisbon Disaster', beginning with the consideration of how unhappy mortals are, who may be fated to bear divine vengeance. In any case, the poem ends with a search for humanity in harmony with the feeling of hope.

Unhappy mortals! Dark and mourning earth!  
 .... Come, ye philosophers, who cry, 'All's well,'  
 And contemplate this ruin of a world.  
 ..... 'God is avenged: the wage of sin is death'?  
 ....  
 A caliph once, when his last hour had come,  
 This prayer addressed to him he revered:  
 'To thee, sole and all-powerful king, I bear  
 What thou dost lack in thy immensity—  
 Evil and ignorance, distress and sin'.  
 He might have added one thing further—hope'.

Voltaire's poem was criticised by Rousseau, who did not agree with evaluating the natural phenomenon from a spiritual and religious standpoint. It is not a question of religion, Rousseau appeared to argue, but rather a question of how men were unable to distribute homes properly across the area and did not foresee the hazards. Providence has nothing to do with man's responsibilities.

All my complaints are . . . against your poem on the Lisbon disaster, because I expected from it evidence more worthy of the humanity which apparently inspired you to write it. You reproach Alexander Pope and Leibnitz with belittling our misfortunes by affirming that all is well, but you so burden the list of our miseries that you further disparage our condition. Instead of the consolations that I expected, you only vex me. It might be said that you fear that I don't feel my unhappiness enough, and that you are trying to soothe me by proving that all is bad.

The Lisbon tragedy opened the theological-philosophical debate of modern times and Kant intervened with an articulate thought of pure reason, hereby seeking scientific explanations for the disaster and avoiding being dominated by compassionate feelings for the dead, among whom were many innocent children.

The earthquakes have revealed to us that the surface of the earth is full of vaults and cavities, and that under our feet hidden mines with various labyrinths run everywhere. The progress of the history of earthquakes will put this beyond a doubt.

Svend's essay (2006) discusses Kant's contribution to the composition of the modern concept of man that had become a constant reference for Europe, in addition to an important moment in the intellectual maturing of the philosopher.

During the earthquake in Turkey in 1999, the journalist, Robert Fisk, asked one of the rescuers, if God was to blame for the catastrophe; the reply, similar to that of Rousseau more than two centuries before, was that the cause was to be sought with the contractors, not with God (Barillari, 2007, p. 9).

### **10. In children, ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis**

When we say that, in children, ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis, we are referring to the fact that children explained the earthquake using pre-scientific expressions. The bio-intellectual development of a child of three contains intuitions that an adult thought, that is, a rational composite, has inherited and perfected over the centuries. Hence, the thought of a child already contains something that will then be transformed on a logical-formal level.

Three-year-old children related the earthquake of May (Gilioli, Deluca 2012) through memories of the noise and trying to understand who the earthquake was and where it lived:

An earthquake is something under the ground and when it has to relieve itself, it makes everything tremble because there is air underground that causes trouble if it doesn't come out!

An earthquake is when the earth vibrates. Because the earth breathes out the houses are destroyed. Then cracks appear in the walls. I saw a lot of caved-in houses. Underground there's oil that pushes to come up from the sea and after it makes the whole earth shake.

It's something that made all the houses shake. It also made them fall down. The earthquake came because the earth started to tremble. When it comes, it makes a lot of noise, but then it stops and then it doesn't come back! I think there are caves underground, where maybe a giant lives and when he gets angry, he makes the whole earth and trees shake. I saw houses that were moving and fell down!

The most common picture is the one of the crocodile monster (Battilani, 2012) that moves the earth and that the children can defeat with intelligence and hard work. Children in the fifth grade of the elementary school in Cavezzo wrote in their diary:

Tuesday, 29 May, 9:03 a.m.

I was peacefully lying on the couch in the living room, watching my favourite television show: 'SpongeBob'. I was home from school because, during the night of the nineteenth of May, at four o'clock, there was a strong earthquake, with its epicentre in S. Agostino in Ferrara; it caused serious damage to our school, which was then declared unfit for use. I wasn't afraid because I was sleeping really deeply that night and didn't hear the earthquake; my mother woke me up and took me outside. Tuesday the twenty-ninth, while I was thinking about my TV programme, the earth started shaking and the tremor didn't stop, it just got worse. Mom was cleaning near me and screamed that there was an earthquake and we needed to get outside right away. She ran to open the door for us, and my sister and I ran out with her right behind us. Once we got outside, the tremor got really strong, like a bomb was going off; the earth went up and down and my mother and sister fell down, but I grabbed onto a post.

Dear diary,

I want to tell you about the horrible time I lived through on May twenty-ninth. I was at home with my mother and sisters, watching cartoons; suddenly, at about 9 o'clock, I felt a rumble and right after that everything started shaking, the walls were moving, things were lying all over the floor: glasses, cups, plates ...a falling ashtray hit my sister, Martina, in the throat. I was really scared! You can't imagine how much! Luckily, I didn't get hurt.

When we realised it was an earthquake, we ran out into the street, screaming ...I didn't quite understand what was happening ... I saw our car lift up, our terrified neighbours in the middle of the street, other people who were

taking shelter in the camper, and Paola who was about to faint, but a bucket of water revived her.

During the few hours spent in Novi, Rovereto, Carpi and Gargallo, we realised that the school had truly done its utmost and the children deserved to see their classrooms rebuilt right away, so they could promptly return in September. To show our recognition and solidarity, we awarded a symbolic diploma to children and persons who had received us. In the school year 2012-2013, teachers and students have been developing research projects on the scientific aspects known about earthquakes and on propositions for reconstructing the cultural and community memory.

## **11. Conclusions**

Earthquakes in Italy are sadly known for the scant advance warning of the disaster and the lengthy reconstruction period, which, in some cases, is still an open item, such as the earthquake in Messina in 1908 (Ostakhova, 2009). The political paradigms are not enough to understand why the actions for governing the Earth do not always reply to the vital needs of the people, why the encounter between institutions and citizenship is unable to surface, why the expectations of the population have such difficulty reaching governing bodies (Jodice, 2000, p.5). The description of the movement that accompanies the collapse of buildings and the destruction of the rhythm of daily life are at the head of an environmental process, in which forces of aggregation and mutual aid coexist. According to the description of the post-earthquake period in Carnia di Craighero (1983, p. 72), the destruction resulting from earthquake tended to consolidate pre-existing situations, in that the most and least vulnerable persons reinforced the socio-psychological structure they already possessed.

The unsafeness of the dwellings and level of damage suffered have only a minimal influence on the system of cultural-symbolic mediation of the people. It was observed that, during the 2012 earthquake, the demonstrations of solidarity of the population continued throughout the month of May thereafter and were more substantial in the most hard-hit communities. At first, solidarity was shown spontaneously by relatives and neighbours and, after a few days, it was organised by civil protection institutions and the fire department. The civil society has demonstrated solidarity in support of the resumption of school activities, even in tents, and in expectation of restoration of the schools in a relatively short time.

Economic agencies, non-governmental organisations and both local and national institutions have given their attention to schools and have committed themselves to reconstructing spaces where students can gather. The immediate recovery of school life in new buildings kept the children and teachers from feeling abandoned and, through their own thoughts, they were able to participate in reconstructing the memory of the community. Moving beyond the experience of the trauma and trying to recall the memory of what no longer exists, from home to the Church, from the town Tower to the Town Hall and from the garden to the edifices in the old town, became a permanent moral task.

For the children, memory meant recalling the past together with their teachers, parents and grandparents. Recounting and remembering together in order to rebuild the cultural and social fabric of the town and community became one of the objectives in the educational plans of 2013. At the beginning, people preferred not talking about what happened, but when school began again, the teachers paved the way to talking, listening and human expression. At school, the rebuilding started from the hearts and thoughts of the children, who reread the earthquake with the eyes of those seeking, in the adults, the capacity to resume the path that had just been cut short.

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