

SSAGA: A Social Sciences approach Against Gambling Addiction

Annick Magnier

Massimo Morisi

Alessio Gori

Marcello Cabria

From the Green Paper of 2011, passing through the Action Plan "Towards a comprehensive European framework for online gambling" of October 2012, till the Recommendation of July 14, 2014, and the corresponding activities that followed (for ex. the seminar of May 5, 2015), the European Commission has repeatedly denounced the addiction caused by on line gambling as a problematic "social fact". In this last document, the Commission invites European Governments to adopt measures oriented to limit the potential risks related to this type of gambling, especially in order to protect children and adolescents, defining as well some possible lines of public intervention (in the direction of regulation, victims assistance, and on site prevention).

In these documents the revenues of the gambling sector in Europe are estimated around 80 billions. "The gambling sector is a growing market, both land based and online. In 2011, the annual revenues generated by the gambling service sector, measured on the basis of Gross Gaming Revenues (GGR) (i.e. stakes less prizes but including bonuses), were estimated to be €84.9 billion (EU 27), with an average annual growth rate of 2.8%. Online gambling services accounted for annual revenues in excess of €9.3 billion, 10.9% of the overall gambling market. The average annual growth rate for online gambling services is 14.7%. In 2015 online gambling is estimated to generate annual revenues of €13.0 billion, 14.2% of the overall gambling market" [Commission Staff working Document, "Online gambling in the Internal Market", 2012].

Available data from Italy, produced by one of the main professional associations of gaming services (SAPAR, Conferenza Stampa Rimini, March 18, 2015), offer for 2013 an impressive figure of 85,6 billions of stakes for the whole sector (on-line gaming excluded), 12 billions of prizes and a GGR of approximately 17 billions. The evident dimension of the national market emerged by this study, and the presumable incongruence with the European reference data, indicates the Italian context as emblematic of the emergence of gambling as a social practice and the correlated gambling addiction as a growing social problem. At the same time these numbers point to the necessity of defining coordinated models of governance adapted to the challenge and the specific context in which it has to be faced.

According to the EC Recommendation, Italy is redefining its legislation, not merely on on-line gambling but on the whole sector of “public gaming”, with a new law “Delega fiscale” which should be approved before autumn. In this legislative project, the competent National Ministry will dedicate 250 millions euro to sustain actions for the prevention of gambling addiction. Nevertheless, no exhaustive model of intervention has yet been defined, with regard neither to the organizational aspects nor to the main directions that the preventive action should privilege.

In this background SSAGA projects intends to propose models of governance of gambling addiction adapted to a national context which can be interpreted as particularly problematic:

- 1) The phenomenon is particularly intense and rapidly increasing (“Il rischio e la regola” Florence, April 13, on line). All around the Italian territory it is possible to accede to different kinds of game in 114.614 places.
- 2) The reform, which will change the setting of public policies on gaming, national and local, and the important investment that the Italian government is prepared to engage in, it is forced not to compromise, in a moment of budget strain, the consistent tax levy originating from the sector, corresponding to 2,7% of the total national budget.
- 3) There is no specific regulatory agency to offer the organizational basis for a national policy.
- 4) A coordinated action between the different levels of government is uneasy to introduce: the population ask the local governments for measures to control the phenomenon, while the local administrations do not dispose of an adequate organization to address the problem. In fact, no public service has been until now dedicated to similar addictions and the associations among pathological gambling victims are organizing slowly.
- 5) Gaming businessmen organizations unanimously intend to underline the ethic sustainability of their activity, through the support of regulations oriented to spread a more responsible gaming practice (for example, one of the main organizations, SAPAR, made an agreement with the National Association of Municipalities and with University teams for the training of the owners of gaming sites). Nevertheless, they are numerous and diverse in their requests to the public sector. Besides the public owned companies, the private business constitute a highly fragmented world: few owners of gaming networks (13), but 5000 new-slot owners, 719 VLT terminal owners, 3450 producers and importers of gaming machines, cards....

Italy today may constitute a particularly useful laboratory for an innovative coordinated action oriented to the gambling addiction prevention. Here, proposals of new models of governance and principles of public action can be elaborated, and then adapted to other similar situations, characterized by a low degree of coordination between the actors involved and a relatively recent social acknowledgment of the problems related to gambling. Such innovative action must be sustained through a systematic transfer of knowledge from the social sciences to a large range of decision-makers and stakeholders. Starting from this specific

context, and two other national contexts similarly characterized by high fragmentation of the stakeholders and strong requests of public policies definition, SSAGA project will valorize the possible contribution of social sciences to the definition and implementation of preventing measures aiming at controlling the different types of gambling addiction; giving evidence to the acquired knowledge in Social Sciences on game behavior and its relationship to hazard and to its utility for improving policies; delineating further areas of research-action, in which social scientists, physicians, administrators, business and civil society representatives may cooperate; experiencing institutionalized cooperation for prevention between experts of different disciplines, businessmen and decision-makers.

From several decades European societies are characterized by a process of progressive erosion of the individual's certainties, on both the values and the economical level. Concepts such as work, welfare state, social stability and a general perspective of future security, have been replaced by a growing existential uncertainty. A concept by now deeply connected to people's lives has progressively gained centrality in the social and economic system: the concept of risk (Beck, Giddens).

The idea of risk has thus become so meaningful in the current context to be seen not just from a negative perspective: it has also acquired some positive connotations and a substantial centrality in the system. This is the case, for example, of the financial market, the heart of the current capitalist system, which is based and built on the concept of risk and on the ability of the individual investors to dare, leveraging their own resources to create wealth for themselves and for others. In this particular context, furthermore, over the years we have witnessed a gradual extension and transformation of the concept: the risk in business has gone through the "positive speculation" for moving to effective gambling. As is evidenced by the recent financial crisis, the operators in the current financial market have nowadays forsaken any reference to the fundamentals of real economy, to follow standards of behavior typical of gambling itself. The concepts of risk and hazard, in this sense, have acquired over the years a symbolic role, full of significance for the whole society.

It does not appear fortuitous, therefore, the fact that in recent years we have witnessed an exponential growth of another industry that puts the risk as its benchmark: the gambling, which has now assumed a presence in the social and economic system that goes beyond that of pure entertainment. This sector, in fact, has experienced in the recent decades a historically unprecedented growth, characterized by the progressive liberalization of the sector and by the proliferation of any kind of game on every available platform. Video lotteries, video poker, slot machines, websites, television programs, sports betting, have become not only the privileged products by the Casinos in the world, they are by now stable elements of our daily lives and of the world surrounding us. The turnover that drives that industry is impressive, making the fortune of whole states which decide to become gambling's fiscal paradises.

In fact, gambling is not only the center of the interests of entrepreneurs and casinos of any kind, but it is promoted and managed directly by the States, and represents nowadays an important economic income for the public finances. Over the years, the relationship between gambling and public regulation has passed several stages, in which the single governments have decided to address the issue in different ways. From the game as a social and popular phenomenon, passing through a period of strict prohibition, then, since the sixties, a period of progressive legalization and regulation of the sector, up to the present time, in which gambling is explicitly promoted and advertised by the states. Gambling, in this sense, has become the tangible manifestation of a new role of the states, and the state-gambling relationship is now also paradigmatic of a new state-citizen relationship.

The gambling is usually accompanied by a massive advertising campaign that paints its character of entertainment and pleasure in a captivating way, making it a symbol of fun and freedom, when not even a possibility of enrichment and an easy way for social growth. This has created the now predominant couple "gambling-gaming". Individual States have realized the huge economic potential of gambling and have gradually turned it into an important voice of their budgets and in a form of voluntary self-taxation of citizens. Since the Eighties, therefore, the State not only has taken note of its inability to take care and to accompany its citizens in their social life, and has accordingly proceeded with the progressive dismantling of the social welfare systems, but it has become itself a promoter and entrepreneur of the risk.

Furthermore, despite the decisive role in the public sector, it is impressive to note that the representation of the risks inherent the gaming industry are often completely neglected in the everyday communicative presence: in the massive and pervasive advertising campaign accompanying the gambling's field, gambling is characterized essentially by a positive social representation. The current system addresses and proposes gambling in the society as a pure entertainment and social pleasure, a pleasant distraction from the daily routine, omitting almost entirely the disclosure of the real risks associated with this "product". This, despite the fact that, from several years, the medical sciences, psychology and psychiatry in particular, have introduced the concepts of "problematic gambling" and "pathological gambling". The methodical practice of gambling, in fact, can be the engine of dangerous phenomena for the individual who, in presence of certain individual and social "risk factors", risks to enter into a spiral of dependency and loss of lucidity, which can lead him to his economic ruin and personal annihilation. For this reason, the only strong binomial socially advertised cannot be just the "gambling-gaming", it is necessary instead to consider also the "gambling-deviance" aspects.

The current choice on the issues related to gambling and its potential risks is to depoliticize the problem, to remove the social value of the phenomenon and to reduce it into a purely individual question, relying on the model of the "responsible player." The public response to the institutionalization of risk by the States and to the problems inherent to it, therefore, relies on individual responsibility: the State places entirely on the shoulders of the citizen the management of the problematics related to the phenomenon of gambling,

counting on the ability of self-management and self-control of individual. In this context, the State creates a legislative framework to the sector, consisting of rules and controllers that can manage and set up the rules of the game. Here, again, appears a significant parallelism with the financial markets: the States establish a context that suggests to the citizen-userinvestor the existence of “safe investment” as well as that of “safe gambling”. Two contradictions in terms that prove often to be counterproductive, instilling in the individual a false sense of security and control that in practice cannot be really guaranteed by the public system: a real trap.

In the recent decades we have witnessed to a proliferation of the phenomenon without precedent. It is difficult if not impossible to predict what will be the actual consequences of such proliferation of the institutionalized gambling, especially among the younger generation that will grow up surrounded by that social and cultural context. For this reason, it is necessary to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon, not only on the medical level, that brings the idea of a therapeutic intervention on the disease, but rather from a sociological and multifactorial point of view. We must make the effort to fully understand the complex dynamics that can lead to the most problematic aspects related to the practice of gambling, without falling at the same time into an easy and useless moralism. The study should primarily ask for the broader comprehension of the phenomenon, with the aim of a practical implementation of the necessary prevention practices, oriented to limit the growing and problematic social impacts of pathological gambling.

SSAGA main objectives are consequently:

1. To foster the clear collective identification of the impact of Social Sciences research in the knowledge of the phenomenon: that is to say of the social, cultural, economic and territorial variables which facilitates its development, on one side, of the social conditions for the definition and implementation of more effective policies, on the other side. To collect and to make available in a systematic presentation, public and associative data, and significant description of best practices involving social scientists (translated in English is one of the first commitment of the partners);
2. To enrich this same scientific contribution of social sciences disciplines developing a European interdisciplinary context open to practitioners;
3. To valorize this same scientific contribution through the participative democratic processes involving in selected local contexts a large range of public and private stakeholders;
4. To create on the basis of these experiences an experimental cross platform, in which social scientists will collaborate with a large range of economic and social actors involved in the world of gaming and in the institutions responsible of its control and of the treatment of the corresponding pathologies;

5. To promote a large dissemination and sharing of the results of these activities work beyond the usual academic community, in the large set of professional communicative channels interested in gambling and addiction, in order to make the experiences easily replicable in different contexts ;
6. To put the basis for similar long-term platforms offering possibilities of permanent exchange between SSH research in the field and European decision.-makers and practitioners in the field.

WORK PROGRAMME

The project aims to develop extensively all the main points contained in the EU Action, inflecting them in the specific context of the analysis, prevention and treatment of pathological gambling addiction.

In particular, through the SSAGA program the partners commit themselves to:

- a) Enrich the analysis of the possible effects of the social sciences contributions on the specific issue, in a European horizon;
- b) Create cross networks, in which social scientists will be placed in a context of reciprocal scientific and cultural exchange with the more relevant stakeholders and in which they will be able to introduce content and process innovations in the addressed specific field, enhancing their scientific experience;
- c) Foster the enhancement of the scientific content of social disciplines in an interdisciplinary context, cross to different social environments, through the practical application of the tradition of studies on participative democratic processes;
- d) Ensure the widest possible dissemination and sharing of the results of these activities beyond the usual academic community, exploiting intensely the information gathered during the project in order to maximize the social impact of the work and if possible to replicate the experience;
- e) Create and maintain long-term platforms as places of permanent exchange. These structures can act as drivers of a positive process of discussion and sharing of knowledge, thus constituting a bidirectional channel of information exchange, to and from the place of scientific elaboration privileged by social scientists and all the other actors directly involved in the activities included in the program, but also to a large audience of individual and collective actors involved at different levels in the issue of gambling addiction.

This commitment will find concretization in the following moments:

- A) The preliminary stage of the project will be characterized by a moment of discussion and analysis, internal to social sciences, which will culminate in the organization of an international seminar-conference with the specific goal of seeking a synthesis of the latest scientific contributions on the topic of pathological gambling. Experts from various SS disciplines will be involved during this phase (psychologists, sociologists, economists,

political scientists). They will discuss the contributions that could possibly constitute a concrete indication able to bring innovation in the field of treatment and prevention of pathological gambling. During the conference, a reflection will also be developed about the specific methodological approaches best suited to share these contributions with all the social stakeholders involved in the matter of gambling addiction. The idea is to outline a work plan that will take advantage of the scientific experiences on democratic participative processes in order to develop and focus the operative discussion between all the subjects involved. A coordinating group, which will sustain the project leader in the implementation of the workplan, including members of the original partners and external experts, will be at that moment defined.

B) Successively, the foundation of new interdisciplinary work structures will be laid. Stakeholders, decision makers, health professionals, physicians, entrepreneurs and lawyers will be identified and contacted, in order to create some experimental networks in several European countries, enhancing the positive experience already underway in Florence in the context of the Research Unit "New Social Pathologies". These networks will constitute pilot projects, with the aim of improving and replicating these experiences in different localities and European countries. At least three of these pilot projects will be developed: in Italy, in Latvia and in Spain.

C) SSAGA intends to implement process innovations in the treatment and prevention of gambling pathologies. To reach this goal, we will use not only the SS knowledge on gambling phenomenon, but also the tradition of analysis on social interactions and on information sharing processes in complex societies, and in first instance its possible applications in the organization of democratic participative processes. The purpose is to open a two-way interaction between the relevant stakeholders in the field and social scientists on the subject of gambling addiction. In this context, social scientists not only will offer their scientific contribution to policies, but also will have the possibility to investigate which communication channels could be opened in the long run. Every single working group will be coordinated according to the principles of participative democratic processes structuring, in order to foster a discussion able to conclude with a summary helping to consolidate the trust between relevant actors, to sustain the decisional process and to create better conditions for the implementation.

D) During the project, specific attention will be paid to the communication activities, and to the constant improvements of the channels through which it is possible to share and disseminate the first results emerged by the experiences of the pilot groups. The traditional relevant problem of the scientific world, to go beyond the usual channels of the scientific communication (publications in journals and academic meetings such as conferences and seminars) will be considered as a main challenge. For this reason, a specific goal of the project is the opening of new communication channels, which will be investigated and individuated during the work path and suggested by the subjects involved, and the defining for this purpose of the most appropriate languages and communication forms.

E) Finally, the last stage of the project will focus on the possibility of transforming the pilot experiences in more permanent centers of discussion, and on their possible replication in other localities or European countries. The idea is to predispose the bases of permanent platforms, where a better exploitation of the results of scientific research, on the one side, and the creation of a privileged place for specific knowledge sharing between social scientists, specialists, stakeholders and decision makers, on the other, will be experimented.

CONCEPT AND APPROACH

This project, aiming at an innovative transfer of social sciences knowledge and scientific attitude in public policies, in order to foster large scale prevention of addictive gambling, is based on the activity developed in the last years by the proponents in two different areas.

- 1) In the inter-departmental University Unit “New Social Pathologies” , has been experienced a stable cooperation between health specialists, psychologists, sociologists and administrative science specialists (<http://www.nuovepatologiesociali.unifi.it/>).

This Research Unit has been in charge of a multidisciplinary empirical research on pathological gambling in a Tuscan local area dramatically exposed to the phenomenon (provincial di Pistoia), sustained by a local Foundation. The originality of the perspective in the Italian context allowed to build a preliminary national network which was successively involved in a program of national conferences. The first national conference gathered, in the current important moment of re-writing of the national regulation of gambling, with the Vice-Minister in charge, the representatives of different associations of gaming entrepreneurs, mayors and representatives of the National Association of Municipalities, lawyers, psychologists, political scientists. A second one is on the program, involving different specialties of social sciences (economics, sociology) and other stakeholders (“Il rischio e la regola, April 14, 2015, <http://www.nuovepatologiesociali.unifi.it/cmpro-v-p-162.html>) .

This activity makes echo in Italy to a growing sensibility to pathological gambling as emerging social problem, corresponding to what occurs in many national and in EU institutions. (see European Commission 2011). The available data in on the phenomenon and its consequences show in fact, not only the necessity to foster the collective acknowledgement of the growing social impact of gambling addiction, but also the necessity to define innovative instruments for knowledge and action, not only at the central Government level, in charge of the national regulation , but particularly among local public decision-makers.

Considering the complexity and the diffusion of the gambling phenomenon, there is a clear need for a multidimensional approach that includes the contribution of different disciplines in order to come to a

greater understanding of the complex set of driving forces influencing the trend to develop forms of compulsive gambling and the development of this disorder.

A preliminary multidisciplinary discussion of the psychiatrist definition of gambling addiction in its relation with the collective definition of a corresponding social problem would be useful. The accepted definition of gambling behavior involves risking something of value in the hope of getting something of a greater value (APA, 2013, p. 683). In the diagnostic point of view of psychiatrists the pathological gambler is a person who has a chronic and progressive inability to resist the impulse to gamble and the resulting behavior, that compromises, disrupts or damages himself, his family or his professional activities. Individuals with this disorder show a substantial difficulty in controlling the impulse to gamble and they tend to invest increasing amounts of money under the illusion they will be able to limit their losses. Individuals with a severe form of pathological gambling show high levels of irritability when they try to stop the gambling behavior. Pathological gamblers put generally in place gambling behaviors when they feel uncomfortable (eg, guilty, helpless, depressed): in addition, it is possible to recognize in them a particular tendency to repeat some patterns (as for example to "run their losses"). Pathological lie and manipulation can be the ways (the strategies) to obtain the money needed to recover from losses caused by gambling, or to have the liquidity to continue the gambling behaviors. Significant contribution to the understanding of gambling derives from neuroscience through the identification of specific brain structures and neurotransmitters that are involved with the onset, development and consolidation of the addictive behavior. Among psychiatrists nevertheless, after the quite recent assumption of pathological gambling as one of the numerous forms of addiction (often converging with others), and not mere impulse control disturb (Petry 2006), the idea that social factors are a determinant of gambling behavior, worth to include largely in case analyses and theoretical constructions on the issue, perhaps more significant than brain chemicals is recently acquiring credibility (Moscrop 2011); following repeated reminds from social scientists (among the first ones: Marcum and Rowen 1974, Skolknick 1978 Rosecrance 1985), but not sufficiently to contest the traditional structures and practices of intervention.

The social science traditionally mobilized to face gambling addiction is psychology, which allows the understanding of the most personal characteristics of the gambler that motivate his impulse to gamble, and, consequently, the ability to plan interventions to promote a process of treatment.

Like Psychiatry and Biology, Psychology in its scientific approach is constantly contributing to an enrichment of the individualistic dynamics of this specific addiction, compared to and in relation with, other forms of addiction. It developed various typologies of gamblers, which enrich the picture of the mechanisms of addiction, emphasizing the differences in relations with the game characteristics. Specially useful appears for example the proposal of Douglas (1995), to analyze gaming behaviors on three different dimensions: personal and motivating interests, preparedness to risk, gaming intensity. Pathological gambling develops as the combined effect of such personal attitudes and the characteristics of the single games, which can become "soft" or "hard" according to the practice: lotteries, considered generally as "soft" games, can become "hard"

if the event frequency allowed is high. Psychology, as far as children and adolescents are concerned, proposes also a tradition of reflection on the notion of “youth resilient personality, describing children and adolescents able to defend themselves from addictions widely spread in their social environment “ (Azmiar 2000, Gupta and Derevensky 1997). A notion which could help to approach more rigorously the analysis of the passage from gambling spreading to gambling addiction spreading, suggesting a collective analysis of the possibilities to sustain the building among children of resilient personalities in a context favoring gambling addiction.

Such disciplinary approaches offer insights on the social dimensions of the phenomenon, they do not systematize them in the comprehensive interpretation of gambling addictions as contextualized social phenomena, necessary to sustain, where requested, altogether contextualized collective actions aiming at controlling it.

A large range of social sciences toolkits may be mobilized for a better understanding of the phenomenon and of the collective possibilities to face it, at the different levels of government, through policies considering the variety of stakeholders involved.

They must sustain the thorough debate necessary to define contextualized lines of collective intervention. As stated in one of the few recent assessment of the contribution of sociology in this field “there have been remarkably few sociological attempts to account for gambling- and this applies whether ‘accounting’ is taken in the sense of explanation , in the sense of understanding, or as covering both simultaneously. Whatever the reasons for this strange gap in sociological accounting – and the sheer absence of reasonably comprehensive empirical evidence may be among them – it should be soon filled by the re-emergence in fashion of carefully conducted small-scale ethnographic inquiries, and the growing availability of officially designed statistics and opinion polls” (Downes et al. in Cosgrave 2006, 101). SSAGA will proceed in its first phase, through the experts involved, to the assessment of such empirical evidence through the comparative discussion of official data and case studies.

If the empirical mobilization on gambling in sociology may be considered as insufficient, the few classical theoretical contributions on gambling helps to emphasize key questions concerning the social interpretation of gambling in its relation with gambling addictions. Effective prevention structures, mobilizing innovative sets of cultural and educative interventions, require sound contextualized analyses on these aspects, traditionally distant from “hard sciences”. Which are the interpretations of play and the relations between play and gambling (recalling Huizinga 1949 categories) in the different contexts (and the consequent diffuse attitudes towards gambling addiction)? Can we consider that the growing propensity to gambling corresponds to the increasing search of a compensation to the inability to change station in life (and consequent search of Alea vs. Competition (as suggests Caillois 1958)? Or of an immediate “consequential” sequence of facts, in which gain is not determinant but counts the refusal of prudential and incremental coping (as suggests Goffman (1967) for whom gambling is the prototype of action)? Or is it strain searched

first of all by the gambler (Devereux 1949) and valorized in some social strata or areas? And, questions not always totally formalized but suggested to the reader by these classical texts; “which are the interpretations of the single games in the single social areas? Which are the social motives for gambling: how is it linked to the construction of individual identities, in which places and groups gambling, through which modalities, is a current topic and vector of socialization?”

– But not only the sociology of gambling must be mobilized for understanding gambling addiction dynamics and the collective reactions to the phenomenon: the tradition of urban sociology must also be mobilized – Particular attention will be dedicated in the project to the territorial dimensions of gambling. The on-line offer and the international economic and cultural organization of the in site offer characterize gambling as a globalized practice. Localities nevertheless matter. Is loneliness, determining the lifestyle in many different territories like sprawled cities or rural areas favouring particular attitudes to gaming? How much may count the competing opportunities of non hazard games offered by local societies? The territorial specificities stressed in the public data may be analyzed in their relations with the capacity of the localities to offer different opportunities to satisfy the expectations of the individuals (forms of play, forms of sociality, opportunities of human development).

Special attention will be consequently dedicated to the description of the territories for which are available case studies, and particularly of their capacity to maintain in a general trend of urban sprawl, centralities and corresponding social aggregations against loneliness. The impact of regulations aiming at controlling and correcting the map of land based gaming must also be assessed.

– The sociology of communication may also help to enrich the knowledge background. Among the questions its toolkits allow to face: Which is the semantic of gambling in communication (in the game industry, but also in the institutional communication against gambling, in the learning programmes) and how is it received by the target populations? Which are the media of the construction of the social problem “gambling addiction”: at which moment and under which conditions is the acknowledgement of the spreading of the pathology sufficient to generate a collective reaction? Which are the actors promoting and leading this collective reaction, their capacity to communicate, and consequently its possible reception in the different areas of local societies?

– Administrative science will be mobilized in two directions. SSAGA will first of all produce an up to date picture of ideal-types of policies currently adopted in this sector, and of trends of innovation.

But administrative science will contribute mainly through a synthesis of the implementation obstacles which can be listed in such a field, on the basis of the existing case studies on gambling control policies, but mainly on the basis of the whole corpus of policy analysis.

The congruence between the different presence models of gaming structures (State administration models, Public entity model, Private company model, Informal aggregation model) and the capacity to develop

preventive measures must be further enquired by the economists. But the contribution which will be required to the economists involved in SSAGA activities will principally aim at understanding which are the enterprises organizational features (structure, business ethics, communication strategies) which this discipline may indicate as determinant for the success of policies of gambling addiction prevention.

Such large cognitive demand, here only delineated, will be progressively enriched thanks to the involvement of social science experts with different research background, from the first phase of the project.

At the origin of the project we find in fact the conceptual framework of the “New Social Pathologies” Research Unit, illustrated by its e recent activities, enlarged, in order to face more systematically the emerging societal challenge of gambling addiction, to a larger set of actors of different European countries. In few words, we start from the observation of the limited effects of policies centered on a mix of regulation and treatment of the addicted persons and often limiting prevention to secondary prevention. We observe also that the analyses of the phenomenon which inspire these policies refer mainly to medicine (psychiatry): the economic, social and territorial factors which contribute, with individualistic features, to transform ludic behaviors in motors of self-destruction, are not adequately emphasized. We consider that this emerging societal challenge is linked to deep changes in socialization mechanisms and in life aspirations, differently impacting according to the localities and the collectivities, fostered by the propinquity of an intense map of gaming rooms and websites, animated by a multifarious business world; and that prevention must consequently involve a large range of local policies (which influence for example urban structure and sociality, leisure behaviors , corporate values...) and must be sustained by research-action aiming at improving organizations and procedures, business ethics, administrative values, education.

2) These moments of knowledge transfer from Social Sciences to decision-makers, operators and stakeholders will use the methods of the democratic participative processes. The proponents have acquired in the last decades a large experience in the organization and the evaluation of participative processes for improving local policies. The different activities included in the program will allow to propose one or more models of participative process aiming at agreeing in a specific area on the specific challenges raised by the gambling addiction phenomenon, at defining consequently a policy agenda and the coordinating measures adapted to realize it.

This model will be defined in two times: a general international workshop gathering social scientists highly specialized in the field will define a first selection of themes and priorities, and reflect on a possible range of traditional participative procedures and stakeholders to involve; national cells of researchers will definitely precise the draft contextualizing it. These participative experiences will be evaluated by the Florentine unit and by external social scientists.

We choose the formula of a classical participative process built on the basis of Social Sciences findings and recommendations, guided by external facilitators: such a formula stresses the autonomy of stakeholders, administrators and local officials in defining a common agenda and helps to build trust through an organized debate.

In the Italian experience the participative process will be based on the technique of the “open space technology”. The work will be developed in three different places of the same large urban agglomeration (Florence) and divided in two different phases: in the first part of the day, three groups will work separately in the three chosen locations, while the resting part of the day will be characterized by a work involving all the process’ participants, which will communicate through the exploitation of telematics means. The formula to adopt in the two other pilot experiences will be decided according to the contextual features.

SSAGA is focused on this pilot participative processes for private and public decision-makers on gambling addiction prevention, which exploit two main specializations of the proposing unit.

Along the different work-packages we proceed to their definition and the choice of the localities in which we shall develop them, delineated in a first time in a larger circle of Social Sciences International Specialists which will allow to enlarge our knowledge on the phenomenon and on the inspiring best practices, successively refined in little national units; to their realization cared by the national cells interested which will be constituted ad hoc; to the evaluation of their process and their results; to the dissemination of the results of the preliminary scientific exchanges, of the participative moments themselves, among stakeholders, decision makers and social scientists. We enlarge consequently progressively the interdisciplinary network of scholars and professionals. (see graph. 1)

In charge of the coordination activity in all the phases of SSAGA will be a “coordinating group” constituted during the first conference. It will include four members of the proponent consortium, and three external experts chosen by the previous ones among the external experts participating in the conference. The coordinating group will immediately define its program, its evaluation standards. He will at least produce a report at the end of each work package. This report will be made available to all the components of the partner groups.

The proponent maintains the whole managing responsibility of the project. The coordinating groups acts nevertheless as consultant and support and ensures the effectiveness of the communication and networking activity.

References:

- Aasved J. Mikal (2003), *The Sociology of Gambling, Vol. 2*, Charles C Thomas Publisher Ltd, Springfield, IL
- American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatry Association.
- Binde Per: *What are the most harmful forms of gambling? Analyzing problem gambling prevalence surveys* CEFOS Working Paper 12, 2011
- Caillois R. (1958), *Les jeux et les hommes*, Gallimard, Paris
- Cases Mendez J. I. (2009) *La importancia social y politica de la industria del juego en Espana*, in Cases Mendez and Gomez Yanez J.A. Cases Mendez J. I. et al. (2014) *Percepcion social sobre el juego de azar en Espana 2014*, IPOLGOB, Instituto de Politica y Gobernanza, Madrid
- Gusano Serrano G. editors, *La industria del juego*, Arranzadi Pamplona
- Cosgrave F., *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader* Cosgrave Jim and Thomas R. Klassen (2001) *Gambling Against the State: The State and the Legitimation of Gambling*, *Current Sociology* 49(5): 1-22
- Devereux E.C. (1949), *Gambling and the Social Structure. A Sociological Study of Lotteries and Horse Racing in Contemporary America*, Harvard University Thesis (quoted in Downes et al. 2006)
- Downes D., Davies B.P., David M. E., Stone P. (2006), "Gambling as a Sociological Problem", in Cosgrave F. (ed.) *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader*, Routledge, London
- EURIPER (2012), <http://www.eurispes.eu/content/rapporto-italia-2012>
- European Commission (2011). http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/gambling/index_en.htm, April 29, 2015
- Gobet F., Schille M. (2014), *Problem Gambling: Cognition, Prevention and Treatment*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Goffman E. (1967) «Where the Action is», in *Interaction Ritual*, Allen Lane, New York
- Griffiths, M. (2009). *Problem gambling in Europe: An overview*. Nottingham Trent University.
- Huizinga J. (1949) *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Routledge & Kegan, London
- Kyngma F. edited by, (2010), *Global Gambling – Cultural Perspectives on Gambling Organizations*, Routledge
- Kyngma S. (2004) *Gambling and the risk society: the liberalisation and legitimation crisis of gambling in the Netherlands*. International gambling studies
- Lyng S. (2004), *Edgework: The sociology of Risk-taking*, Routledge, London
- Mc Millen, Jan (2003) "From Local to Global Gambling Cultures", in *Gambling: Who Wins? Who Loses?* Ed. Gerda Reith, 49-63. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- McMillen, Jan, ed. (1996) *Gambling Cultures: Studies on history and interpretation*. London Routledge.
- Meyer G., Hayer T., Griffiths M., *Problem Gambling in Europe: Challenges, Prevention, and Interventions*
- Moscrop, A. (2011)). "Medicalisation, morality, and addiction : Why we should be wary of problem gamblers in primary care" ., *British Journal of General Practice* **61** (593)

- Muñoz-Molina, Y. (2008). Meta-análisis sobre juego patológico 1997-2007. *Revista de Salud Pública*, 10(1): 150-159.
- Orford Jim, *An Unsafe Bet? The Dangerous Rise of Gambling and the Debate we should be having* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)
- Petry, N. (2006). "[Should the Scope of Addictive Behaviors be Broadened to Include Pathological Gambling?](#)". *Addiction* **101**: 152–60,
- Reith Gerda, Ferguson Harvey, *The Age of Chance: Gambling in Western Culture Book*
- Shaffer, H.J., LaBrie, R.A., LaPlante, D.A., Nelson, S.E., & Stanton, M.V. (2004). "The road less traveled: Moving from distribution to determinants in the study of gambling epidemiology". *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 49:504- 16.
- Slutske, W. S., Blaszczynski, A., & Martin, N. G. (2009). "Sex differences in the rates of recovery, treatmentseeking, and natural recovery in pathological gambling: results from an Australian community-based twin survey", *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 12(05), 425-432
- Smith G., Hodgins D., Williams R. (2007) *Research and Measurement Issues in Gambling Studies*, Elsevier, Oxford (UK)
- Volberg Rachel A., Wenden Abbott Max (1999) *Gambling and problem gambling in the community: an international overview and critique*, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, New Zealand
- Young M., (2010) *Gambling, Capitalism and the State - Towards a New Dialectic of the Risk Society?*, Journal of Consumer Culture, Vol. 10, no. 2