



**Fostering teenagers:
how to recover the relationship
with the mother thanks to
another woman's help**

NATUR&- Onlus - ITALY

www.natureseveso.org

+ What NATUR& is

- Born in **1995** from the environmental experience of the Circolo **Legambiente Laura Conti in Seveso** and the political experience of **Libreria delle donne di Milano**.
- Since **1997**, when the Regione Lombardia approved and financed the experimental project "***La Canturera di NATUR&. A foster experience beyond the community and the nuclear family***", the core of its social work in the area consists in fostering adolescents and supporting critical family situations in order not to separate and institutionalize their children.
- From 1997 to 2013 NATUR& fostered 30 young women sent by the Tribunale dei Minori: social emargination (12), psychiatric families (6), light cognitive disability (3), lightly psychiatric girls (5), foreigners (4).

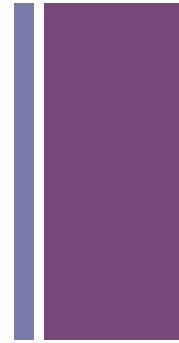
+ Methodology



The model of intervention implies fostering young women in a community by the house of the Association a part of a historic Villa in Seveso surrounded by a wonderful park owned by the municipality. We call this method *Affidamento-residenzialità*.

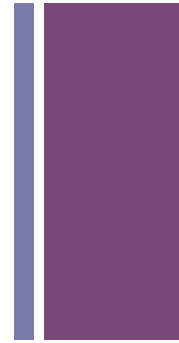
+ Methodology

- **The team of professionals** follows each girl in her every day life.
- Every girl creates a peculiar relationship with her fostering woman, who keeps a strong link with the professionals.
- The life project is shared by the working team which includes the foster woman together with the social service in charge according to the method of the community *case management*.
- The core of this method consists in the main value which is given to the closer and most important figure in the care: the foster woman in this case.
- Particular attention is given to the birth mother and father also in order to protect the emotional contribution of the foster woman, which is considered the most important part of the project.



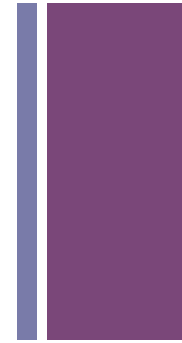
+ **Outcomes and values to share with an European audience**

- The **central target** of the project wants to recover a respectful relationship by the fostered girls towards their birth parents, specifically the mother.
- Even if differently according to their personal abilities, all the young girls have acquired correct tools to afford a sufficiently free and dignified adult life.
- Therefore we consider this method, based on the possibility to recover the relationship with the mother thanks to an other woman's help, worth to be shared in this European audience.





Evaluation hypothesis: further and beyond



- In 1998 the project “*La Canturera di NATUR&. A foster experience beyond the community and the nuclear family*” meant to experiment fostering adolescent girls in a fostering perspective that could find an answer to their needs and could overcome those difficulties that nuclear families and communities usually have to face with adolescents
- The evidence that came out from our research in 2013 allows us to say that the “*beyond*” we were looking for consists in the feeling to be part of a particular relational context.
- This relational context is embodied in an Association the name of which is NATUR& and that takes its life from a house that is the house which every one feels as his own house and shared by the others.

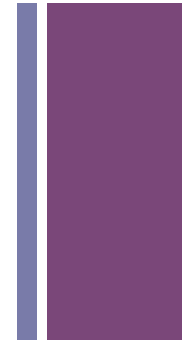
+ Evaluation hypothesis: further and beyond

- We find in this “beyond” the answer to one of our evaluation hypothesis: how the young foster woman can profit by the relationship with the Association in critical or successful moment.
 - Let's hear **Luigia Cassina**, who fostered **Isa**, a young psychiatric woman; **Betty Farina**, social worker of **Alessandra**; **Sara Beretta**, who fostered Kerly, a girl from Ecuador.



How the young foster woman can profit by the relationship with the Association in critical or successful moment

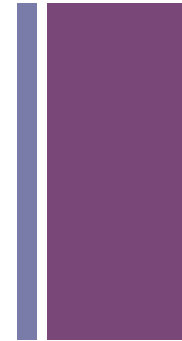
Luigia Cassina talks about herself in NATUR&





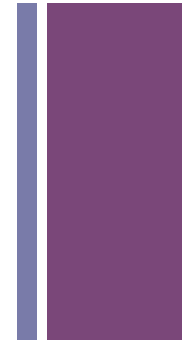
How the young foster woman can profit by the relationship with the Association in critical or successful moment

Betty Farina talks about Alessandra





How the young foster woman can profit by the relationship with the Association in critical or successful moment





Evaluation hypothesis: the quality of the restored relationship with the mother

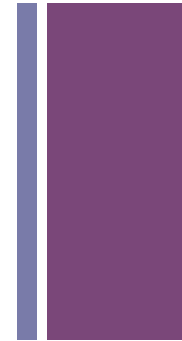
We organized our research with a 14 question interview to 7 foster women, 7 fostered adolescents, 3 birth mothers of fostered girls, 3 social assistants and 2 operators in NATUR&.

- We dedicated a specific question to the relationship between the fostered girl and her birth mother, in the final section of the interview in which we asked for an evaluation of the experience.
- To the specific question: how has the relationship with your mother changed before and after the fostering experience, these are the answers given by Simona, 28, fostered for 8 years and Corinne , 21, fostered for 5 years.

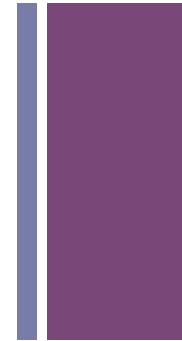




The quality of the restored relationship with the mother

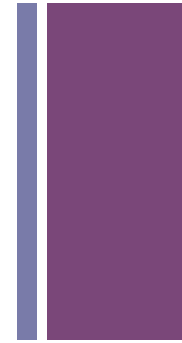


+ The quality of the restored relationship with the mother





the quality of the restored relationship with the mother

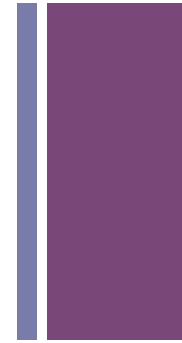


- The result of this change in the relationship with the mother allows the girls to free themselves from the feeling of rage and hatred they had towards their mothers, forgive them and summon their strenghts towards their self realization.
 - **Laura** says «I don' t feel guilty anymore for my mother' s sufferings, now I have to take care of myself».
 - **Floriana** says: «I know my mother' s needs but I also know that I am not the one who can solve her problems»



The quality of the restored relationship with the mother

- This important aim has been confirmed by the mothers we could interview.
- Antonella, 48, Luana G' s mother and Anna Maria, 47, Luana P.' s mother, both fostered with NATUR&, said they now have a good relationship with the daughter. The point is the respect each of them feels coming from the daughter.



+ **Affective relationships**

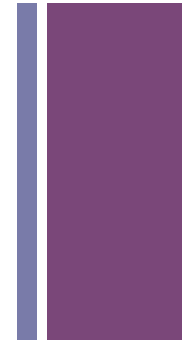
- We consider the ability to create a significant relationship as an evidence of a successful result.
- The target of our work is the ability to stay in a relationship (the relationship with the foster woman mainly) as a starting point to create other bounds.
- We listen now to **Pia Di Simine**, foster woman of **Corinne**, **Corinne** herself and **Sara**, who fostered **Kerly**.



Affective relationships

Pia talks about her relationship with Corinne

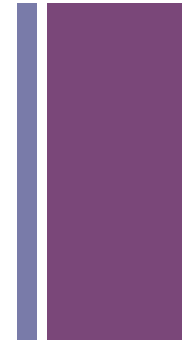
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Affective relationships

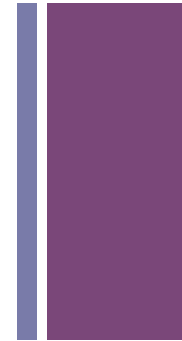
Corinne talks about her relationship with Pia





Affective relationships

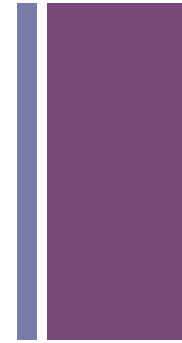
Sara talks about her relationship with Kerly





Present situation of the fostered young woman

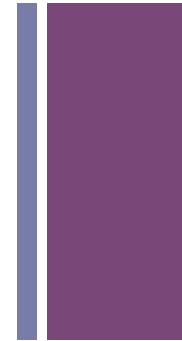
- **Simona:** 28, lives in an flat owned by her mother (which was inherited by her grandmother) close to her foster aunt (her mother's sister). She received another flat from her dead father which she and her mother have rented. She looks after her handicapped mother and they both share their flat with Federica, who as Simona has been fostered by NATUR& in the same period. With them lives also Simona's boyfriend. In her words she describes this an easy familiar and peculiar context in which she lives well. She also works occasionally as a cleaner.
- **Corinne:** 21, lives temporarily with her boyfriend in his family's house but they are moving in a house they have already bought. She is doing a temporary work which she likes a lot and hopes to transform into a permanent job.





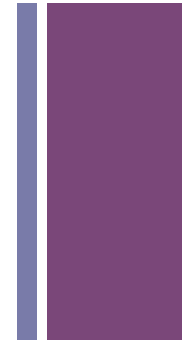
Present situation of the fostered young woman

- **Isa**, 26, lives with her father's wife while her father is in prison. She is in charge to the local psychiatric service who sent her in Casa Aperta when she was 22 and had stayed until 21 in a psychiatric community. She worked in the voluntary service and hasn't got a fixed job. She has been recognized invalid at 80% . Her social workers that looked after her since she was a child, think Isa still has got a lot to conquer, but they feel greatly satisfied by the fact that Isa is able to keep in contact with the operators of the service that looks after her an, even in a very light way, with her foster woman.
- **Kerly**: 24, lives with her mate in a rented flat and she has just had a baby. She works as an hairdresser: profession she does like and which has always been her lifebelt.





Present situation of the fostered young woman

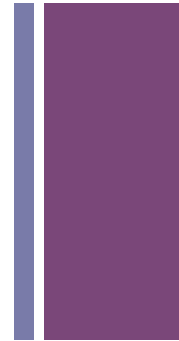


- **Alessandra:** 36, lives alone in the house she inherited from her parents (both dead) and she works as an assistant in a canteen. It is a protected permanent job which allows her to **hearn her life.**
- **Laura:** 22, lives with her husband in a rented flat and she has a 2 years old baby. She worked as a shop assistant but now she is still at home to look after her baby.



Present situation of the fostered young women

- **Floriana:** 31, lives with her daughter in a rented flat. She married but separated after short time, even if she keeps a good relationship with her ex husband mainly for the daughter. She is now engaged in a new love relationship with a man, she is beautician and very happy of her present job in a sanitary context. She recognizes a great help given her by a psychotherapeutic support she paid, not long ago.



+ Fostering adolescents as a way to restore the relationship with the mother thanks to another woman's help

- A work by Gemma Beretta and Germana Cavallini.
- Thanks to Fabio Tosetto and Dario Angelo Colombo for their help.

■ Seveso, September 7th

