
Within the education the community the Reggio Emilia Approach is well known: From Sweden to Japan preschools work with this pedagogical approach. But the genesis of the first “asili d’infanzia” (self-managed schools for 3- to 6-year-olds) in Reggio Emilia has hitherto been undiscovered. The project thus grew out of the search for answers to the questions:

- How emerged women’s resistance in Reggio Emilia?
- How emerged women’s engagement for the “asili” in Reggio Emilia?
- What was the contribution of women of the “Gruppi di Difesa della Donna e per l’Assistenza ai Combattenti della Libertà” (GDD) and later on the “Unione Donne Italiane” (UDI) in Reggio Emilia to the genesis of a new pedagogy?

The research project thus aims to investigate the influence of the resistance of the citizens of Reggio Emilia on the development of the “scuole de’ll infanzia” (schools for 3- to 6-year-olds) (of the Reggio Emilia Approach) both during the period of the “Resistenza” and the Nazi occupation as well as in the post-war period.

The project ideas have been developed by Dottoressa Sabine Lingenauber (University of Applied Sciences in Fulda, Germany).

She contacted the last living contemporary witnesses through the staff members Steffen Kreuseler and Matthias Durchfeld of the „Istituto per la storia della Resistenza e della società contemporanea in Provincia die Reggio Emilia” (Istoreco),
- developed a questionnaire together with her research assistant Janina von Niebelschütz,
- engaged the photographer Simone Aprile, after she saw his pictures of the project “Nzuliddu” in Sicily (Modica)
- developed the concept for the film, that the filmmaker Nico Guidetti shot and cut.

It was her idea to let the women in the film “The Women and the Schools of Reggio Emilia” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiPVrGwV78E) speak for themselves and to forego any comments.

The first interviews took place in May 2015 with three partisans and founders of the first “asili d’infanzia” in Reggio Emilia:

- Loretta Giaroni (born in 1928) was one of the leading representatives of the „Unione Donne Italiane” (UDI) and since 1967 councillor for the school system and social services of Reggio Emilia.
- Marta Lusuardi (born in 1927) was a partisan during the period of Nazi occupation, a member of the “Unione Donne Italiane” (UDI) and she worked
together with Loris Malaguzzi in the municipal “scuole dell’infanzia” of Reggio Emilia.

- Giacomena Castagnetti (born in 1925) was a partisan during the period of Nazi occupation and in the “Gruppi di Difesa della Donna” (GDD). As a member of the “Unione Donne Italiane” (UDI) she was elected for the municipal council of San Martino in Rio in 1951 and for the city council of Castelnovo Monti in 1970.

Four further interviews with female partisans and women of significant influence, from the period of the expansion of the municipal “scuole dell’infanzia” till present times, took place in December 2015 and in June 2016:

- Prof. Carla Rinaldi (born in 1947) is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, President of “Reggio Children” and the first President of the “Reggio Children – Loris Malaguzzi Centre Foundation”. From 1970 till 1994 she worked as the first “pedagogista” in the municipal “scuole dell’infanzia” of Reggio Emilia together with Loris Malaguzzi.

- Eletta Bertani (born in 1941) was a member of the “Unione Donne Italiane” (UDI), city councillor in Reggio Emilia, a member of the Italian Parliament and President of “Reggio Children”.

- Jones Bartoli (born in 1930) was a member of the “Unione Donne Italiane” (UDI), from 1970 till 1980 she was minister for social services of the regional government and from 1980 till 1986 she was minister of the provincial government inter alia for the school system.

- Lidia Greci (born in 1929) was a partisan during the period of Nazi occupation and in the “Gruppi di Difesa della Donna” (GDD). As a member of the “Unione Donne Italiane” she became councillor for social services in Reggio Emilia in 1956 and in this position she was responsible for the first municipal “scuole dell’infanzia” in Reggio Emilia.

Publications:

Lingenauber, Sabine: Die Frauen und die Schulen von Reggio Emilia (DVD). Weimar (to be published) Teaser-Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiPVrGwV78E


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