

Margherita Zoebeli from Zurich to Rimini. A life devoted to childhood

Edited by

Dorena Caroli, Tiziana Pironi, Ilaria Bellucci,
Monica Maioli, Mara Sorrentino



Transnational History of Education and Civilizations

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This series of volumes aims to publish monographs or collective volumes, both in Italian and other languages, concerning the history of pedagogy as widely understood within the Italian university field M-Ped/02. The studies will address issues that include the history of pedagogical ideas, education and educational institutions in general, and, in particular, preschool institutions and children's literature. Particular attention will be devoted to transnational and comparative dimensions of the educational problems and to pedagogical transfers of the past, which allows us to grasp the circulation of educational models and reciprocal influences at an institutional and cultural level. The multiple approaches of cultural history will also be adopted for the interpretation of the educational reforms and institutions of the different historical periods.

The volumes are subjected to double-blind review.

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On the cover: Margherita Zoebeli with children from the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre – CEIS (1954), Photopress Zürich (AMZ, CEI-0253_025), previously published in the Swiss weekly Cooperation, n. 26 (1954).

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFP	Archivio Fotografico dei Positivi della Raccolta storica della Biblioteca civica Gambalunga di Rimini (Photographic Archive of the Positive of the Historical Collection of the Gambalunga Public Library of Rimini)
AMG	Allied Military Government
AMZ	Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive)
BGR	Biblioteca civica Gambalunga, Rimini (Gambalunga Public Library)
CEIS	Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre)
CEMB	Centro Educazione Musicale di Base, Rimini (Basic Music Education Centre)
CEMEA	Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell' Educazione Attiva (Active Education Methods Training Centres)
CEPAS	Centro di Educazione Professionale per Assistenti Sociali (Centre for Professional Education for Social Workers)
CIDEF	Centro di Innovazione, di Documentazione Educativa e di Formazione (Centre for Innovation, Educational Documentation and Training)
CIRSE	Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa (Italian Centre for Historical Research in Education)
CLN	Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (National Liberation Committee)
CTS	Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (Typography at School Cooperative)
DSS	Dizionario Storico della Svizzera (Historical Dictionary of Switzerland)
ECA	Ente Comunale di Assistenza (Municipal Assistance Agency)
ENAOLI	Ente Nazionale Assistenza Orfani dei Lavoratori Italiani (National Board of Orphan Assistance for Italian Workers)
ETH	Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology)
FICE	Fédération Internationale des Communautés d' Enfants (International Federation of Children's Communities)
FIER	Fédération Internationale des Enseignants de Rythmique (International Federation of Eurhythmics Teachers)
ICEM	Institut Coopératif de l' École Moderne (Cooperative Institute of the Modern School)

IRPA	Istituto Regionale per l'Apprendimento (Regional Institute for Learning)
IRRSAE	Istituto Regionale di Ricerca e Sperimentazione e Aggiornamento Educativi (Regional Institute for Educational Research and Experimentation and Update)
ISF	Internationale Socialiste des Femmes (Socialist International Women)
ISME	International Society for Music Education
JLR	Jeunesse Laïque Républicaine (Republican Lay Youth)
MCE	Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Movement of Cooperative Education)
MZ	Margherita Zoebeli
ONAIR	Opera Nazionale di Assistenza all'Italia Redenta (National Work of Assistance to Redeemed Italy)
ONMI	Opera Nazionale per la protezione della Maternità e dell'Infanzia (National Maternity and Child Protection Organisation)
OSEO	Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière (Swiss Workers' Mutual Aid Society)
SAH/SOS	Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk / Soccorso Operaio Svizzero (Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation)
SCI	Servizio Civile Internazionale (International Civil Service)
SEPEG	Semaines Internationales d'Études pour l'enfance victime de la Guerre (International Weeks of Study for Children Victims of War)
SIA	Solidarité Internationale Antifasciste (International Anti-Fascist Solidarity)
SIEM	Società Italiana per l'Educazione Musicale (Italian Society for Music Education)
SIFF	Switzerland International Film Festival
SOS/SAH	Soccorso Operaio Svizzero / Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk (Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation)
SSK	Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War)
UDI	Unione Donne in Italia (Italian Women's Union)
UIPE	Union Internationale de Protection de l'Enfance (International Union for Child Protection)
UISE	Union Internationale de Secours aux Enfants (International Union for Child Relief)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany)

Introduction

Dorena Caroli, Tiziana Pironi, Ilaria Bellucci,
Monica Maioli, Mara Sorrentino

This volume collects the proceedings of the conference dedicated to Margherita Zoebeli entitled *Margherita Zoebeli (1912-1996). A centodieci anni dalla nascita. Una vita per la pedagogia attiva al servizio dell'infanzia (Margherita Zoebeli (1912-1996). One hundred and ten years after her birth. A life for active pedagogy at the service of childhood)*. The conference was held on 18 and 19 November 2022 at the University Campus of Rimini, Italy. It was organised by the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin” of the University of Bologna, in collaboration with the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation, the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS) and the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini¹.

The main objective of this two-day conference was to reflect, on the basis of archival documents, on the valuable work carried out by the Swiss educator and pedagogist who moved to Rimini at the end of the Second World War. Thanks to Margherita Zoebeli and her national and international contacts, the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village), which she founded and which later became the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss

¹ The conference was organised by Dorena Caroli and Tiziana Pironi, Full Professors of History of Education at the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin”, in collaboration with Monica Maioli, President of the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation), Ilaria Bellucci from the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS), Mara Sorrentino (archivist-librarian of the Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini) and with the help of ICARO group, showcasing the documentary film *Lo spazio che vive (The space that lives)* (2022), a work by Rimini director Teo De Luigi, who died a few weeks before the conference. The event was sponsored by the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin” and the University Campus of Rimini under the auspices of the Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa (Italian Centre for Educational Research - CIRSE), the “Gina Fasoli” Active Teaching Research Centre and by the Festa internazionale della Storia (International History Festival) of the University of Bologna.

Educational Centre - CEIS), became a true workshop of active pedagogy in the post-war years. The aim of the conference was thus to focus on the pedagogical and educational value of the choices made, certainly influenced by the situation of the time, while underlining their relevance for today's training of educators and teachers, a training that is becoming increasingly important in view of the new challenges and emergencies that education is facing today².

The conference strived to investigate the pedagogical and documentary heritage of CEIS for the students of the following Degree programmes: Primary Teacher Education, Expert in Social and Cultural Education, Educator in Childhood Social Services, and Planning and Managing Educational Interventions in Social Distress.

Professional development has always been a flagship of CEIS, which has always been a point of reference for the training of teachers and educational professionals and a research ground for renowned pedagogues from various Italian universities. Moreover, the different activity enabled CEIS to launch courses for social and educational workers in the 1980s in cooperation with the Department of Education Studies of the University of Bologna – the Centro di Innovazione, di Documentazione Educativa e di Formazione (Centre for Innovation, Educational Documentation and Training - CIDEF).

It is also worth mentioning that on 23 January 1989, Margherita Zoebeli, Paulo Freire and Mario Lodi were awarded honorary Degrees by the University of Bologna, on the proposal of the Department of Education Studies and the Degree Course in Pedagogy. On that occasion, Andrea Canevaro, the then director of the Department, stated that the decision to award this distinction was motivated by the need to «search in the present for that part of history to which we can give value»³. He considered that what they all had in common was their commitment to the field of education, which had led them to work «in reality, with institutions, risking every day to be trapped and trying every day to ‘reinvent the world’»⁴.

² It is precisely because of the importance of CEIS' activities over the years that an interdisciplinary research group was set up at the Department of Education Studies "Giovanni Maria Bertin" on 19 July 2023. The group was established thanks to the collaboration between CEIS and the Department and brings together scholars and researchers from different fields.

³ A. Canevaro, *Fra l'imprudenza e il coraggio*, in «L'Educatore», 24 (July 1989), p. 6. In this issue, the magazine devoted special attention to the event entitled "Le Lauree *Honoris Causa* alla scuola e agli educatori di tutti" (Honorary Degrees for everyone's school and educators), and published in full the lectures delivered by Zoebli, Freire and Lodi during the award ceremony in the Aula Absidale di Santa Lucia.

⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 5-6.

In her speech to a packed conference hall, whose title “*Il progetto-sogno educativo*” (*The educational dream-project*) said it all, Margherita Zoebeli reflected on her more than 50 years of experience, guided by the idea that «a different kind of education can change the world», a conviction that led her to conclude her speech with these words: «Faith in humanity has never failed me, despite the exaggerated individualism of our society, the many wars across the planet, the social injustices in every part of the world»⁵.

Over the years, an intense scientific activity has sought to promote the educational legacy of CEIS, recognising its innovative nature⁶. Margherita Zoebeli and her activities have been the subject of historical studies and research projects, starting with the collection published after her death, edited by Teo De Luigi and Stefano Pivato, *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, which presents a series of essays, accounts and photographs⁷, with a preface by Rita Levi Montalcini. Having visited CEIS and met Margherita Zoebeli, Rita Levi Montalcini recognised the extraordinary value of her work. She stated: «I think that CEIS should be seen as a value to be developed, not only to remain as it has been for 50 years, but to become a symbol of human relations, of what I would call solidarity rather than friendship, to give young people correct information and never, NEVER to talk about racial hatred»⁸.

In 2011, on the initiative of Carlo De Maria, a conference was organised by the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation) and CEIS, which was the starting point for a series of historiographically significant studies, reconstructing in particular the network of relationships that Zoebeli had woven while creating her educational experiment⁹. These in-

⁵ M. Zoebeli, *Il progetto-sogno educativo*, in «L'Educatore», (24 July 1989), p. 15.

⁶ See for example the history of CEIS as seen by children: L. Biondelli, R. Calieri, A. Fabbri, N. Gallazzi, G. Sapucci & G. Zannucoli (eds.), *A scuola nel Villaggio. Parole chiave ed esperienze del CEIS di Rimini. Rilettura e aggiornamento delle parole chiave del Centro Educativo italo svizzero di Rimini, a sessant'anni dalla sua nascita. Un contributo all'impegno educativo della città e al rinnovamento della scuola italiana*, Gardolo (TN), Erickson, 2008.

⁷ T. De Luigi & S. Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, presentation by R.L. Montalcini, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 1996.

⁸ R.L. Montalcini, *Introduzione*, *Ivi*, p. 7.

⁹ C. De Maria (eds.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*. Proceedings of the conference held at the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) (Rimini, 7 May 2011), Bologna, Clueb, 2012; Id., *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015. See also the recent collection *Utopia e concretezza: ricordiamo Margherita Zoebeli a 110 anni dalla nascita/Utopia and pragmatism: remembering Margherita Zoebeli 110 years after her*

clude Tiziana Pironi's research, focused on the pedagogical role that the so-called (at the beginning) Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) has played over the years as a centre promoting active and cooperative education throughout Italy¹⁰.

Equally important has been the research that has examined CEIS from an architectural point of view. In the introduction to the collection *Lo spazio che educa. Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, the editors point out that even in the original design of the Village, planned by Schwarz together with Margherita, particular importance was attached to community life with a specific arrangement of pavilions, articulation of the outdoor spaces, a communal square and smaller squares, and to greenery. Even today, the outdoor and indoor spaces invite children, parents and adults who visit the centre to linger, they encourage encounters and dialogue with nature and with others, promote discovery, invention, experimentation and self-government. The urban design of the village thus becomes the main mediator of an education in sociality, in the individual's sense of belonging to the community, where well-being is also guaranteed by the quality and care of the natural and built elements, by creative and responsible participation in the care of such places and things, as an integral part of the community itself.

In the same vein, in 2017, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of CEIS, Andrea Ugolini published a volume collecting the contributions of the conference organised by the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation) and the Centro Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre). On this occasion, the concept of space behind the layout of the Village was examined in depth and from its inception, also considering it in a European dimension¹¹.

Finally, a few days after the conference, Christian Raimo published a book in which he devoted a chapter to the experience of Margherita Zoebeli. He saw her as a woman deeply imbued with anti-fascist sentiments, whose «educational ideal was one and the same with her militancy in the Spanish Civil War or her commitment to the Resistance»¹². While describing a school

birth, in «Clionet. Per un senso del tempo e dei luoghi. Rivista di Public History: storie, percorsi, saperi, arti e mestieri», <https://rivista.clionet.it/autore/carlo-de-maria/>, last accessed: 11/08/2023.

¹⁰ See in particular the chapter *La comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli: il CEIS di Rimini*, in T. Pironi, *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Carocci, 2014, pp. 151-179.

¹¹ A. Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi e baracche. Bambini. CEIS: Riflessioni a più voci su un'architettura speciale*. Texts by K. Fabbri, A. Lambertini, M. Maioli, T. Matteini, S. Morri, M.L. Stoppioni, A. Ugolini, Firenze, Altralinea Edizioni, 2017, pp. 17-18.

¹² C. Raimo, *L'ultima ora. Scuola, democrazia, utopia*, Milano, Adriano Salani Editore, 2022, pp. 219-243 (in particular p. 243).

that, on the basis of what CEIS has achieved, must become a guarantee of social advancement, Gianluca Argentin recently underlined how, unfortunately, this guiding principle is today dramatically compromised¹³.

Given the lively educational dynamics of today's society, the conference organised on 18-19 November 2022 focused on the activities that Margherita Zoebeli carried out over the decades: the didactic innovation in kindergartens and primary schools, the approach to juvenile deviance and disability, the training of teachers and educators and the network of professionals of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre).

Research in the Fondo d'Archivio di Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive Fund) has brought to light new and largely unpublished aspects of the work of the Swiss educator and pedagogist, as can be seen from the contributions collected in this volume, which are the papers presented at the conference arranged thematically. In the first part, the various essays examine in depth the following aspects: the network of international relations that underpinned Margherita Zoebeli's work at the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation (Pironi); the centrality of expressive activities in the initiatives she promoted for children during the Spanish Civil War (Meda); the relationship between pedagogy and architecture in the construction of the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) (Maioli); the relations that Margherita Zoebeli established with other avant-garde initiatives, such as the Scuola-Città Pestalozzi in Florence (Betti); and the importance of CEIS in the promotion of cooperative pedagogy in Italy (D'Auria).

The second part gathers those contributions that reconstruct the history of the educational institutions created by Zoebeli in the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village), and, in particular: the evolution of the kindergarten considered in relation to the national and international context (Caroli); the contribution of the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) to the development of open-air schools in Italy (D'Ascenzo); the activities of the summer camps in the second post-war period on the initiative of Margherita Zoebeli (Salustri).

The third part analyses in detail those experiences and didactic activities within the CEIS that were innovative and, in some way, pioneering for local and national schools such as: the inclusion of children with disabilities (Caldin-Sapucci); the use and creation of children's books in pedagogical activities within the Village (Grandi); the new musical approach by children (Addessi). Finally, given the importance of photography in Margherita Zoebeli's teaching activities, a section dedicated to the photographic archive

¹³ G. Argentin, *Nostra scuola quotidiana. Il cambiamento necessario*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2021.

could not be omitted, as it also documents CEIS activities through the lenses of famous photographers of the time (Sorrentino).

At the end of the third part, Cristina Gambini (Gruppo Icaro) presents the interesting documentary dedicated to CEIS, made in 2022 by director Teo De Luigi, who died a few days before the conference. Finally, the Appendix, edited by Maurizio Boarini, brings together six testimonies from current and former educators at CEIS, whose experience spans more than twenty years. These are voices that, in a trip down memory lane, maintain an immediate style, unfiltered by editorial work, and preserve the spontaneity of the educational relationship developed with the children.

The editors would like to thank everyone at the University Campus of Rimini who contributed to the organisation of the event, including its President, Alessia Mariotti, and all the staff for their professionalism. They would also like to thank the staff of the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini, who constantly facilitated the research of the sources and allowed the publication of the photographs held in the Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive). They are also grateful to Gruppo Icaro for the screening of Teo De Luigi's documentary, *Lo spazio che vive* during the conference.

Through this close collaboration between the University and the local authorities of Rimini, the editors hope that CEIS will continue to support and accompany the children in their growth, as interpreters of the values of freedom, solidarity and democracy.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

PART ONE

Margherita Zoebeli
from internationalism to activism

Authors

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ticles and essays in journals or books in Italy and abroad such as: *Dalla storia della pedagogia alla storia dell'educazione. Accenti epistemologici e metodologici nel secondo '900 in Italia* (Como-Pavia, Ibis, 2019); *Don Milani: dal diritto all'obiezione al "dovere di non obbedire"* ('Gli Argonauti', July 2021); *L'Opera Nazionale Balilla: una nuova istituzione per la formazione ideologica dei giovani rimasta in ombra. Alle origini di una ricerca sul Ventennio (1922-1943)* (Mosca, RAO, 2021); *Itinerari e proposte di rinnovamento pedagogico e culturale nel sistema formativo italiano del secondo dopoguerra: l'area laica* (Macerata, EUM, 2022); *L'incidenza del pensiero e dell'opera di John Dewey e della pedagogia attivistica internazionale sul rinnovamento e sulla democratizzazione del sistema scolastico nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra* (Macerata, EUM, 2022).

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The main objective of the conference (18-19 November 2022) was to study, through archival documents, the valuable work carried out by the Swiss educator and teacher, who moved to Rimini after the Second World War. Thanks to Margherita Zoebeli and her national and international contacts, the Villaggio Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) she founded, later the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS), became a true workshop of active pedagogy in the immediate post-World War II period.

The contributions focus on the pedagogical and educational value of her choices, considered in the context of the time, while also trying to highlight their relevance for today's training of educators and teachers, a training that is becoming increasingly important in view of the new challenges and emergencies that education has to face.

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