



Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

REINVENTING EDUCATION

2-5 June 2021

VOLUME I

Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

**Proceedings of the 2nd
International Conference of the
Journal Scuola Democratica
REINVENTING EDUCATION**

VOLUME I

Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"
Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy

Edited by

The Organizing Committee the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

<https://www.rivisteweb.it/issn/1129-731X>



Published by: ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 – Rome, Italy

Published in Open Access



This book is digitally available at:

<https://www.scuolademocratica-conference.net/proceedings-2/>

© 2021 Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica"



Unless otherwise stated, all contents published are subject to license

Creative Commons - Attribution - version 3.0.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/it/>

It is therefore possible to freely reproduce, distribute, transmit and adapt data and analysis of the Volume, including for commercial purposes, provided that the source is cited. Images, logos, any registered trademarks, and other content owned by third parties belong to their respective owners and cannot be reproduced without their consent.

How to cite a proceeding from this Volume. APA citation system:

Author, N., Author, S., (2021). «Title», in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica "Reinventing Education"*, VOL. 1, *Citizenship, Work and The Global Age*, pp-pp

ISBN 978-88-944888-6-9

The Rights of the Child as an International Dimension of Civic Education

Nicoletta Lanciano and Stefano Scippo

Sapienza Università di Roma, nicoletta.lanciano@uniroma1.it

Sapienza Università di Roma, stefano.scippo@uniroma1.it

ABSTRACT: *We present some possibilities to work in the school of the first cycle on children's rights, in line with the aims and principles of the international dimension of civic education in Italy. Our didactical proposal aims to promote the idea that children are subject of rights, and that the assumption of this perspective leads to the resolution of many problems of adults too (Tonucci, 2021), so much that the issue of children's rights assumes a priority value (Costerbosa, 2019). The article contains some examples of activities with students (from 8 to 13 years old) and with immigrant women of a CPIA: we started from a reduction of the articles of the UN Convention and from the use of Tonucci's cartoons, which activate thoughts and emotions in original and provocative ways. Moreover, we argue that the proposal to work on children's rights is consistent with the aims of Law 92/2019, which introduced in Italy Civic Education and assigns it the task of promoting «all actions [...] aimed at feeding and strengthening respect for people» (art. 3, c. 2), including children. Finally, addressing the complexity of the issue of children's rights means addressing its international dimension, because this complexity is linked above all to the multiplicity of interpretations that different cultures give to the basic notions of children, law, protection, participation, etc.*

KEYWORDS: *Rights, Children, Civic Education, UN Convention.*

Introduction

We start from the awareness that very few people, even among educators and teachers, know the Convention on the Rights of Childhood and Adolescence, from the conviction that the introduction of Civic Education must also take into consideration aspects of scientific literacy and, therefore, should also be understood as part of educational programs relating to science, with the hope that children and young people will be increasingly directly involved in decisions relating to what concerns them in their education and in associated life.

So, we present some possibilities to work in the school of the first cycle on children's rights, in line with the aims and principles of the international dimension of civic education in Italy.

1. Children's rights, a brief history

1.1. From an 'object' of protection, to a 'subject' of rights

The history of children's rights is long, and it is hard to trace its origins. If we wanted to narrow the field to the history of the Western world after the industrial revolution, we could find the progressive abolition of child labour and the introduction of compulsory schooling.

Then, the attention to the child spread more and more in the legal systems of Western countries. For example, in 1896 Germany approved a law that punished parents who mistreat their children, or in 1899 USA established juvenile courts. Thus, we arrive at the twentieth century, when the League of Nations in 1924 approved the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defined the fundamental rights of the child, but it declined in 1946 with the dissolution of the League of Nations (UNICEF, 2014).

The same year, Korczak had written a declaration of the rights of the child, called Magna Charta, and among the rights there were the right «to have secrets», «to respect their sadness», «a lie, a mistake, an occasional theft» (Korczak, 1919/2017).

After the Second World War, it was necessary to wait more than 10 years to arrive at a new document: the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN in 1959, which contains, for example, the right to a name and to education. In 1966, two International Covenants made certain provisions binding, such as the right to protect the child by the family or the state in the event of a parents' divorce. Finally, in 1989 UN approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child, so we moved from an idea of a child as an 'object' of protection to an idea of a child as a 'subject' of law (UNICEF, 2014).

1.2. Some issues about the UN Convention

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved by the UN General Assembly in 1989, today is the «most ratified international document in the world», but this wide legal acceptance does not correspond to such wide knowledge or sufficient implementation (Bosisio, 2018). That is also because, since the Convention was adopted, «it has become increasingly clear that there are still wide cultural differences, from which we must not and cannot ignore if children's rights are to be made effective and the 'normative imperialism' is to be avoided» (Ivi, 9). There still are many issues raised over the years about the Convention: the appropriateness for children of the language of rights, their individual and social responsibility (Ronfani, 2013), the different interpretation of the concepts of protection and participation of children (Macinai, 2017).

From a pedagogical point of view, we suggest dealing this complexity directly with children, touching some fundamental questions, as «what is a right? What are/should be your rights?». This is a valid didactical way to promote the idea that children are subject of rights, and that the

assumption of this perspective leads to the resolution of many problems of adults too (Tonucci, 2021), so much that the issue of children's rights assumes a priority value (Costerbosa, 2019).

2. The 'stands of rights'

2.1. *Emma Castelnuovo and her Mathematical Expositions*

The educational activities we are talking about were tested during the *Didactics of Sciences* course held by one of the authors of this work, aimed at students at Sapienza University, in the degree course in Pedagogy and Educational Sciences. In this course we want to support an idea of science that can reach and interest everyone, which we must study how to bring to everyone mathematics and sciences in a friendly way. So, it is an idea of science that is not pedantic and fanatically positivist, but which questions itself and does not have complete answers for all the questions, which reads and rereads itself, which is connected to the world around us and to our experience with its constant new and complex challenges to our curiosities but also to our desires, our emotions, and our know-how.

With this in mind, the professor involves the students of the courses in different paths to question themselves on the didactic level, on how knowledge is built with the use of direct observation and laboratory experiences, with the construction of objects that become models and suggest metaphors, with the activation of imagination and the ability to ask questions. Another pole of attention is the child and the young person to whom our didactic action is addressed.

The path of the course flows into the construction of laboratories, which we call science stands: here, for a day, students experiment a didactic practice that questions and stimulates visitors – students, teachers or the general public –to discover, to whom they propose questions, (objects to be manipulated, calculations and observations in the open air, in the tradition of Emma Castelnuovo's *Mathematical Expositions* E.C. Esposizide di matematica, C.D.E. e N.L. Emma Castelnuovo). Emma Castelnuovo was a revolutionary teacher of mathematics at the Tasso middle school in Rome, from 1945 to 1979, and she conceived the *Mathematics Expositions* like moments, at the end of the year, when students become 'teachers' for a day, with all the responsibility of this condition: they can in fact receive difficult questions or find themselves managing unscheduled answers. Moreover, it is a particular form of final examination, which contributes to the 'evaluation' and 'self-evaluation of effectiveness' of the students. These, in fact, put themselves to the test with an audience that questions them to understand, that does not always know their arguments and therefore is very different from the professor who demands 'repetition' of what is proposed in class!

2.2. *'Give us the Moon!'*

In 2019, 50 years had passed since the first human landing on the Moon and for this reason, during the course of 'Didactics of Sciences', the human missions to the Moon and on it were taken as a guiding thread, starting from the fantastic literary journeys of Jules Verne up to the Apollo Missions of the years 1960-70.

In 2019, we were also 70 years after the Declaration of Human Rights and 60 from the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, reaffirmed by the International Convention on the Rights of the Child which, for master's students of Pedagogy and Education and Training Sciences or of Mathematics but interested in teaching, it is quite important to know.

In 2018, among the 'Science Stands', a laboratory was organized and entitled 'Give us the Moon', offering a series of activities and reflections on children's rights, starting with a text by Gianni Rodari.

Among the pages of the newspapers of the time, relating to the exploration of the Moon, at the end of the 1960s, the director of the *Corriere dei Piccoli*, the first weekly entirely dedicated to an audience of children, had invited a great journalist and writer, Gianni Rodari, to write a column. Gianni Rodari, whose centenary of his birth was recently mentioned, worked on the ability of children and young people to express themselves, knowing how to welcome, understand and value their point of view. A few decades ago, therefore, the famous writer had already grasped that adults were not very careful in taking care of the younger ones, who were thus quite defenseless in Western and industrialized societies. Then Gianni Rodari, in his column, in 1969, launched a proposal writing: 'GIVE US THE MOON!, not to us, but to the children.'

We will come up with our decisive, ultimate, revo... .. – wait for me to take a breath – revolutionary proposal: give us the Moon! That is, not to us: to the children. Since there is little space on Earth, and that little disappears in concrete and parking lots, reserve the Moon for children under 14: a Moon-Robinson, a Moon-amusement park, a Moon to play!

Rodari's provocation makes it clear how little space was left for children in cities and in the attention of those who manage them, even 50 years ago! A space that is reduced like the awareness that children have rights is reduced.

In a final course report, the students who organized this Stand wrote that they wondered why this great Italian writer for children, he used such provocative language and they asked themselves how little we are protecting the rights of children and young people: already in the early 2000s, this theme had taken on such importance, as to push the UN to

conduct a relevant international study, through UNICEF. The data collected, published in 2006, are not at all comfortable¹.

For this reason, during the 'Didactics of Sciences' course, they asked themselves whether children and young people themselves, adults, parents, educators and decision-makers, are aware of the rights of children and their protection, enshrined in a Declaration of the United Nations, and in particular, they wondered if they know it.

2.3. Rights according to children (and not only)

The students of the 'Didactics of Sciences' course, after having met Francesco Tonucci in a lesson of the Course and having read and discussed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they wondered if the children themselves, but also the adults, parents, educators and decision makers were aware of the rights of children and their consideration. But above all, they asked themselves this question: if children had the opportunity to have their say, what rights would they want to express?

So, during the Stand Exhibition, they asked to visitors of different ages and conditions, children, teenagers, adolescents, and adults of the CPIA² who visited the stand, to write or draw the rights they would have liked to be guaranteed to everyone in their own ideal world.

Especially with older children, it could be a gamble to ask 'what rights would you like to be recognized?'. A pleasant but serious situation was therefore created in which you understand well what the request is, in which you do not give any answer, but everyone expresses something truly thought and felt. The results obtained show how the right climate was created.

Visitors were asked to write or draw the rights they would like to be guaranteed for everyone in an ideal world. The proposal was welcomed by all with enthusiasm and the students have thus collected pages full of needs and desires.

The most frequently mentioned rights were the right to play, to rest, to go to school, to eat whatever they want, to study, to have a family, to be loved, the right to speak, to express themselves and to have free time.

Some rights have left us speechless for the sensitivity and courage that hide behind the pen or the drawing, such as the right 'to be sad'; to 'not have too bad teachers/professors'; to 'not be judged for one's culture or religion'; to 'have access to culture regardless of financial

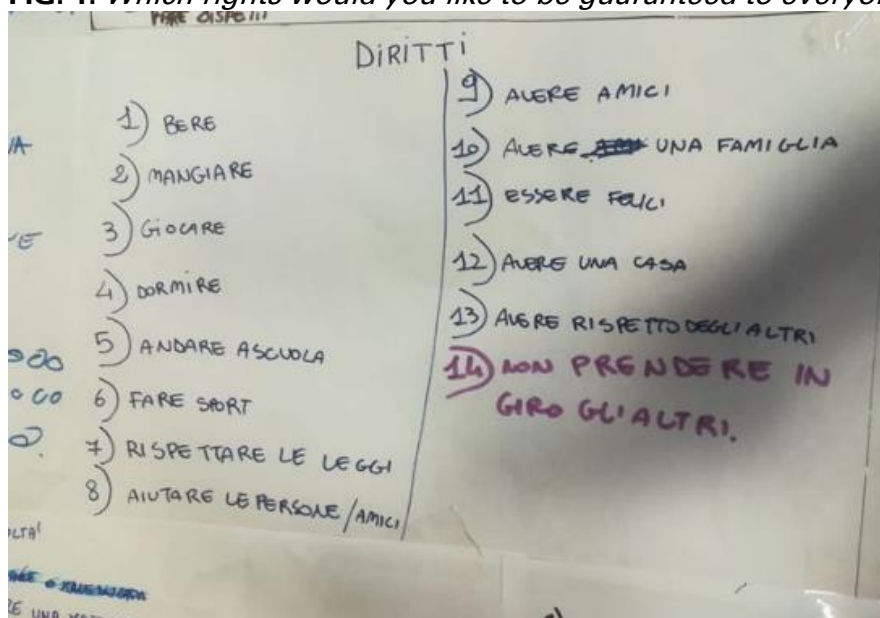
¹ Data collected between 2002 and 2004, published on the UNICEF website (United Nations Fund for Children). For any further information see <https://www.unicef.it/doc/323/studio-onu-sulla-violenza-contro-i-bambini-statistiche.htm>.

² CPIA are Provincial Adult Education Centers (*Centri Provinciali di Istruzione degli Adulti*). These are structures that offer personal and professional training services to Italian and foreign citizens of the territory.

resources'; to 'grow freely'; to 'freely decide who to be'; 'the right to gender equality'; 'to life and happiness'.

Many children and young people have given answers and explanations that have moved us for their depth: they have spoken to us about freedom, judgments and prejudices, happiness, future, autonomy, and self-determination. Wanting to quote some of the words they wrote, it is worth mentioning, among others, the right to 'have people who love you', to 'express their ideas', to 'make decisions for themselves' and 'to know what's happening in the world'.

FIG. 1. Which rights would you like to be guaranteed to everyone?



In other years, the Stand on Rights has been proposed, in which those who lead the laboratory place themselves in a position of listening and suspending judgment to facilitate the active participation of all. *The general objectives were explicit:*

- To promote awareness of the rights of children and adolescents.
- To contribute to the knowledge of the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent' of 1989.
- To stimulate the ability to share and reflect in a group.
- To promote actions that help to deal with conflict situations with adults and children.

Many coloured materials were used, such as posters, cards, pens, woolen threads, pins, scotch tape, coloured post-its, scissors, crayons, glue, and some cartoons by Francesco Tonucci, used in an original and provocative way capable of activating thoughts and emotions through a language that is not only verbal.

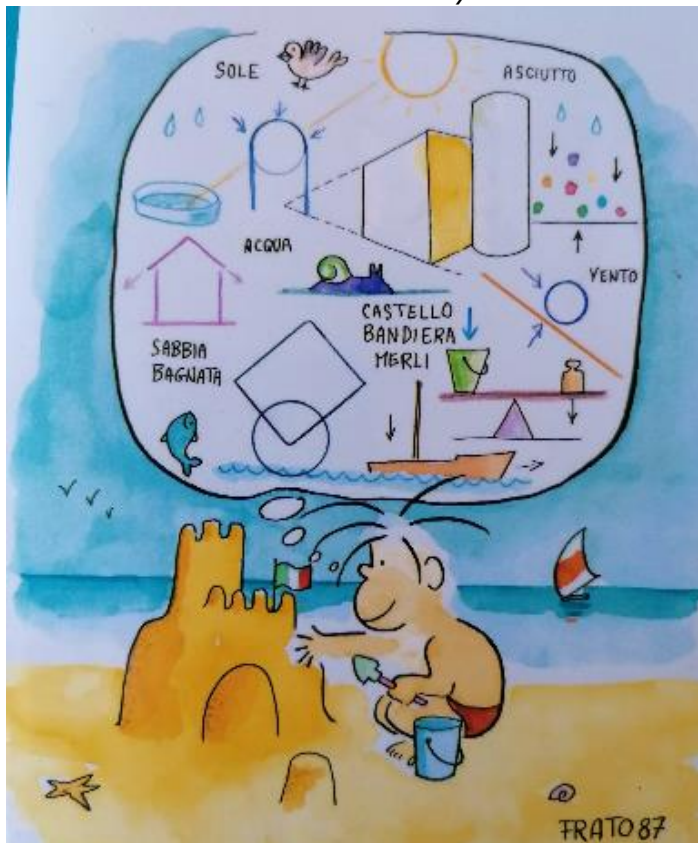
Francesco Tonucci is a researcher in sciences and theories of cognition of the CNR, currently retired, and is the creator of the project *The city of girls and boys*, active in Italy, Spain and in various countries of the Latin America. He is known by the name of Frato as an ironic

cartoonist, who takes the defense of younger children with respect to the rhetoric of the rules, customs, school habits, families, cities and who unmasks suffering, injustices, and distraught desires of repressed children, as Loris Malaguzzi writes about him in the presentation of the book 'FRATO 50 years with the eyes of the child'. Friend of Mario Lodi and active like him in the MCE (*Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa*), he has collaborated with magazines such as *Riforma della scuola*. In his recent text *Urban guerrilla manual - for girls and boys who want to defend their rights*, Tonucci introduces Janus Korczak, the Polish Jewish doctor who organized a sort of republic in the Warsaw orphanage with an assembly, a newspaper, and a court, and who died with the children, in 1942, in the Treblinka extermination camp.

In an emblematic Tonucci's cartoon, we can see a child making a sandcastle, and in the meantime he thinks of the difference between dry and wet sand, of the shapes it can give to its construction (a cylinder with a cube on top of ...), and to the slope of the hill on which to put the castle and to the direction of the wind.

When a child plays in the meantime he learns, puts into practice strategies, doing sends him back to many old and new acquaintances.

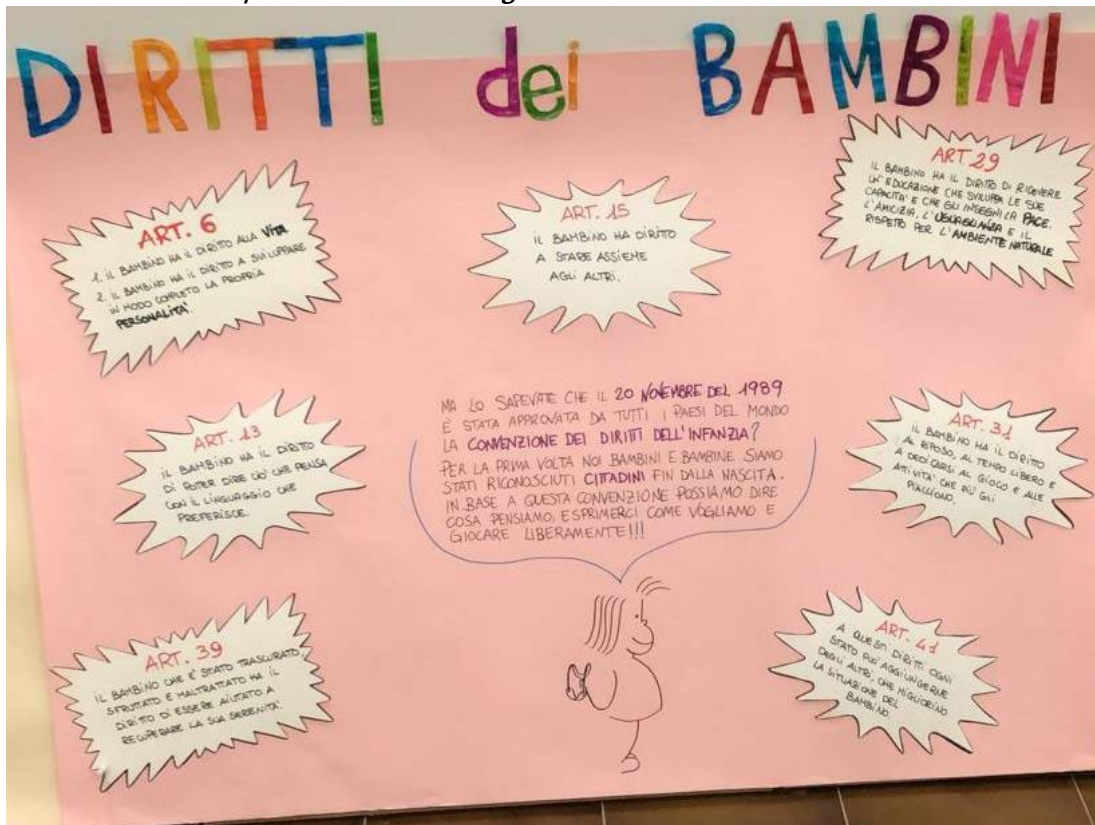
FIG. 2. An emblematic cartoon by Frato



Moreover, in the 'Stands of rights', the students transcribed some Articles of the Convention in the simplified version on coloured cards.

- Art. 6. The child has the right to life. The child has the right to fully develop his or her personality.
- Art. 13. The child has the right to be able to say what he thinks in the language he prefers.
- Art. 15. The child has the right to be with others.
- Art. 29. The child has the right to receive an education that develops his abilities and that teaches him peace, friendship, equality, and respect for the natural environment.
- Art. 31. The child has the right to rest, to have free time and to devote himself to the games and activities he likes best.
- Art. 39. The child who has been neglected, exploited, and abused has the right to be helped to recover his serenity.
- Art. 41. To these rights each state can add others, which improve the situation of the child.

FIG. 3. Some simplified children's rights from the Convention



2.4. A three steps laboratory

The laboratory we are proposing is structured in three phases of work.

Phase 1, questions/guiding stimuli.

In the first phase, we ask some questions to the visitors of the stand, depending on the school degree. For primary school children, we propose to ask: have you ever thought 'it's not fair'? Who did you turn to?

For first grade secondary school students, we propose to ask: 'have you ever felt trampled on? Who did you turn to?' For everyone, we propose to ask: what is a right? Do you know that exist a 'Chart of the Rights of the Child'?

During the 'Didactics of Sciences' course, some visitors of the stand answered as follows. To the question 'What is a right?' a primary school child answered, 'That thing ... to go to school!', and another one replied 'But this is a duty!!!'. As we can see, they do not agree, so a dialog was opened in this case. Another one answered, 'Something everyone can do, not just a few.'

Some first-grade secondary school students answered as follows: 'One thing ... Of the laws ... For each person.', 'For example ... Go to school!', 'One thing you deserve.'

As we wrote in the previous paragraphs, the stands were also visited by some foreign women of the CPIA. They answered as follows to the same question ('What is a right?').

'It's something we must have ... something we have.'

'It is a necessity.'

'One thing you must have and you can have.'

'For example, the right to eat, drink ...'

'... Play, shelter ...'.

'... What is your due'.

Another question for first-grade secondary school students was 'Have you ever felt stepped on?' and 'Who did you turn to on these occasions?'

They answered as follows.

'Yes ... when one can do something, and the others can't.'

'We did not feel listened to by the teachers. They give us punishments because we are a class group, but to listen to us instead we are not.'

'I feel helped by my parents'.

'I, on the other hand, from parents, no, not so much ... sometimes from friends.'

'It comes to mind in sports ... in football. They have power over you, they move you from one side to the other ... I talked about it with dad.'

Phase 2, activity.

In the second phase, for the primary school children, we divide them into pairs, and we distribute them cards with the cartoons of F. Tonucci. With the threads previously prepared, we ask them to link each cartoon to one or more articles, all arranged on the posters.

For first-grade secondary school students, we divide them into pairs, and we distribute cards with the cartoons of F. Tonucci, having previously deleted the writings from the comics. They have to complete the cartoons with the words they deem best suited to the images, taking into account the rights shown on the poster or others they know.

FIG. 4. Linking each cartoon to one or more articles, during the Stand

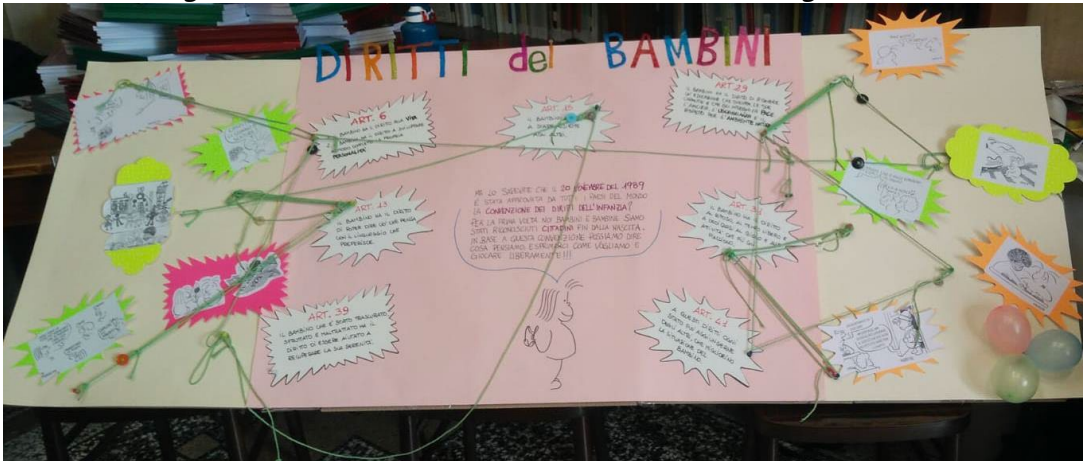


FIG. 5. Completing the cartoons with the words that students deem best suited to the images



For the foreign women of CPIA, we ask them to write on two coloured post-its some characteristics or particularities that they have observed in children in Italy and in children in their country of origin.

FIG. 6. Words of the women of the CPIA

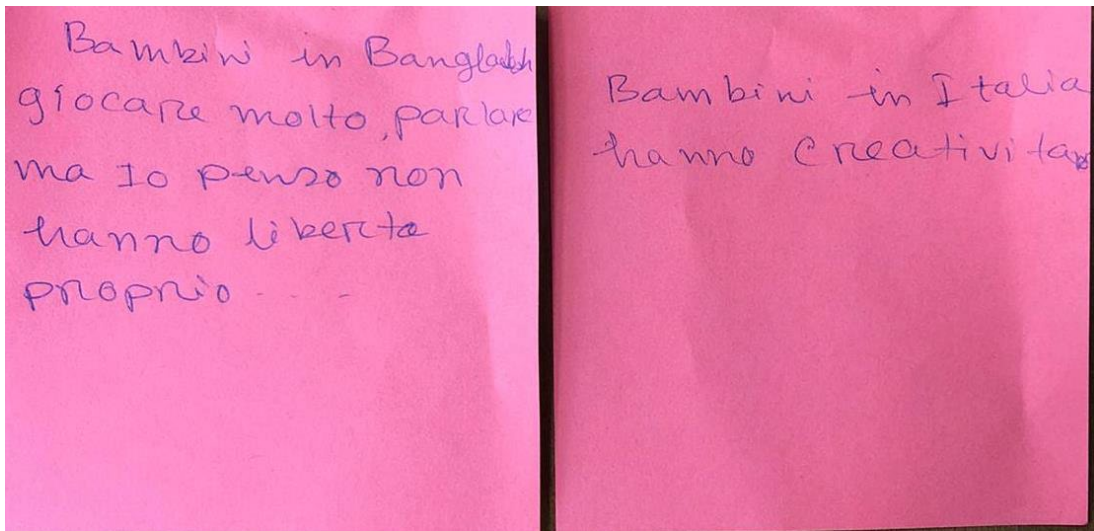
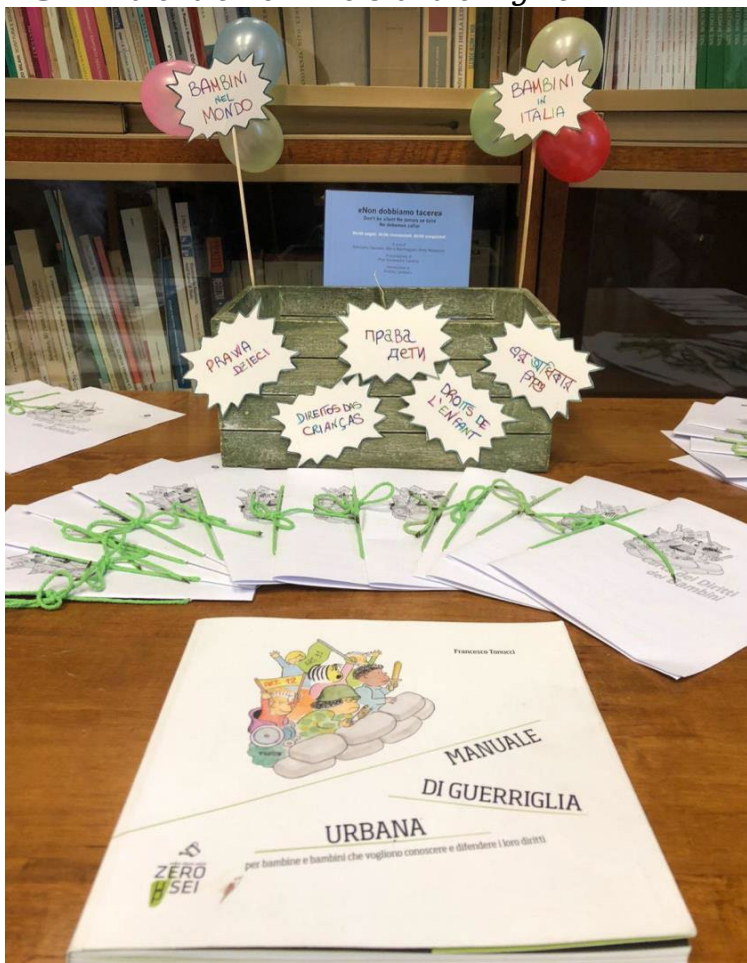


FIG. 7. Materials from the Stand of rights

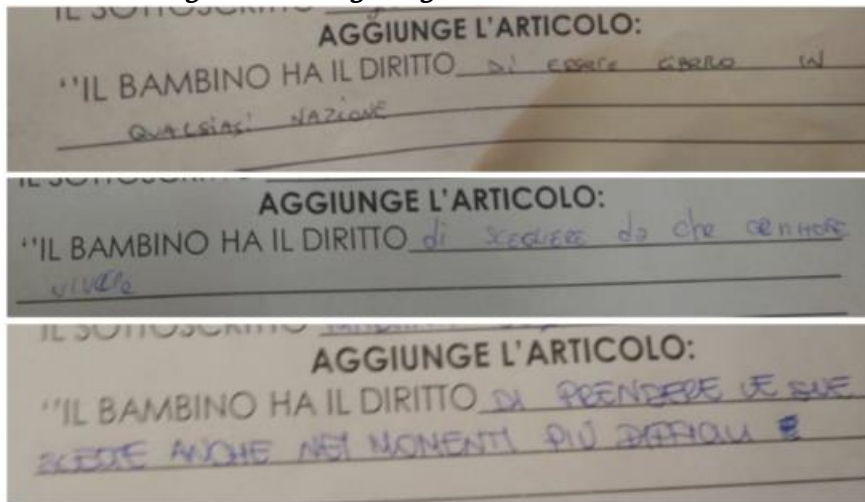


Phase 3, conclusion.

Referring to article 41, which states that «each State can add others rights, which improve the situation of the child» (Tonucci, 2018), we ask

children, students and women to write or add a right that they consider fundamental for every child in the world.

FIG. 8. *Writing and adding a right*



At the end of this laboratory, following the experiences observed in recent years, such as the urgency of what recent immigrant children and women have expressed with a sense of liberation, we thought about proposing to set up in schools a 'corridor of rights': trampled on rights, recognized ones, discovered ones, etc.

Conclusion

Concluding, with this kind of activities, we confirmed that, also in our country, there's not enough knowledge of the Convention on the rights of the child, among children and adults too.

Moreover, we think that addressing the complexity of the issue of children's rights means addressing its international dimension, because this complexity is linked above all to the multiplicity of interpretations that different cultures give to the basic notions of children, law, protection, participation.

Secondly, we think that asking directly to children what their rights may be is a revolutionary act, in a world where adults try to keep their power. Indeed, adults struggle to leave room for children for one of their own active participations in the organization of social life, cities, family life, schools, parks, etc. That is why we think that it's important to listen to what children think and what they want, as we can see in some town around the world, where the municipal administration established the Kids' Council, from a Tonucci's idea.

Asking directly to kids what they want, for example we could find that they don't like to have parks with slides and plastic houses, but they prefer to have parks with logs, sands, fountains, places to hide, like hedges or caves.

Finally, we think that the proposal to work on children's rights is consistent with the aims of Law 92/2019, which introduced in Italy civic education and assigns it the task of promoting «all actions [...] aimed at feeding and strengthening respect for people» (art. 3, c. 2), including children. Moreover, it is consistent with the reference to the UN Agenda 2030, which sets among its objectives «the choice of inclusive ways of life that respect the fundamental rights of persons» (MIUR, 2020, 1). In addition, the law identifies, among the fundamental principles of civic education, the promotion of «full and conscious participation in the civic, cultural and social life of communities, in compliance with the rules, rights and duties» (art. 1, c. 1), as well as «the principles of [...] the right to the health and well-being of the person» (art. 1, c. 2).

References

- Bosisio, R. (2018). «I diritti dei bambini: stato dell'arte e nuove sfide», *Rassegna bibliografica infanzia e adolescenza, Nuova Serie*, n. 3-4, 5-15.
- Castelnuovo, E. (1972). *Documenti di un'esposizione di matematica*. Turin, Boringhieri.
- Cavinato, G., Marchegiani, M., Mazzucco, A. (2014). *Non dobbiamo tacere. Diritti negati, diritti riconosciuti, diritti conquistati*. Carpi, APM Edizioni.
- Costerbosa, M. L. (2019). «I diritti dei bambini come priorità: Una vicenda europea», *Rivista di filosofia del diritto*, VIII, 137-60.
- Degli Esposti, C., Lanciano, N. (2016). *Emma Castelnuovo*. Rome, L'Asino d'oro.
- Korczak, J. (2017). *Come amare il bambino*. Milan, Luni. (Original work published 1919).
- Lanciano, N., (2019). La didattica dell'esempio – formare educatori e insegnanti: didattica della matematica e delle scienze all'università. *Cooperazione Educativa*, 2, 47-53.
- Macinai, E. (2017). I diritti dei bambini nella società dei consumi: protezione e partecipazione. *Rivista di storia dell'educazione*, 2, 89-102.
- MIUR (2020), *Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica*. june.
- Rodari, G. (1969). Vogliamo la Luna. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, 15.
- Ronfani, P. (2013). «I diritti dei bambini: vecchie e nuove questioni» *Sociologia del diritto*, 2, 107-30.
- Tonucci, F. (2016). *Cinquant'anni con gli occhi del bambino*. Bergamo, Zeroseiup.
- Tonucci, F. (2019). *Manuale di guerriglia urbana*. Bergamo, Zeroseiup.
- Tonucci, F. (2021). «Il bambino come motore di cambiamento», *Studi Urbinati, B-Scienze umane e sociali*, 69, 661-84.
- UN, (1989). «Convention on the rights of the child. Treaty 27531», *United Nations Treaty Series*, 1577, 3-178.
- UNICEF, (2014). *La storia dei diritti dell'infanzia*. <https://www.unicef.ch/it/media/621/download>.