

# Teresa Mattei. Commitment to childhood and education through communication

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## Abstract

Teresa Mattei, a prominent figure in the Italian historical and political landscape of the 20th century, is best known for her involvement in the Resistance as a partisan and her subsequent political activity, first in the Constituent Assembly and then in Parliament. Her life and thought represent an example of determination, engagement for justice and equal rights, and are intertwined with the broader history of Italy. Teresa Mattei was also actively committed to children's rights and in the field of education. From the 1960s, she was the promoter and animator of the project 'Il cinema fatto dai bambini' ('Cinema made by children') of the Monte Olimpino cooperative, a unique experience in Italy that combines pedagogy and cinema, offering children the opportunity to express themselves freely through the medium of film. Mattei later founded the League for Children's Right to Communication and developed some projects dedicated to children and their relationship with communication.

Teresa Mattei, figura di grande rilievo nel panorama storico e politico italiano del Novecento, è conosciuta principalmente per il suo impegno nella Resistenza come partigiana e la sua successiva attività politica, prima all'Assemblea Costituente e poi in Parlamento. La sua vita e il suo pensiero rappresentano un esempio di determinazione, lotta per la giustizia e la parità di diritti, e si intrecciano con la più ampia storia dell'Italia. Teresa Mattei è stata anche attivamente impegnata per i diritti dell'infanzia e in ambito pedagogico. A partire dagli anni Sessanta è promotrice e animatrice del progetto 'Il cinema fatto dai bambini' della cooperativa Monte Olimpino, una esperienza unica in Italia che unisce pedagogia e cinema, offrendo l'opportunità ai bambini di esprimersi liberamente attraverso il mezzo cinematografico. In seguito Mattei fonda la Lega per il diritto dei bambini alla comunicazione e sviluppa alcuni progetti dedicati ai bambini e al loro rapporto con la comunicazione.

**Keywords:** Teresa Mattei; pedagogical activism; experimental cinema; childhood; communication

**Parole chiave:** Teresa Mattei; attivismo pedagogico; cinema di sperimentazione; infanzia; comunicazione

We learnt from children how to communicate  
with them without teaching them anything  
because children understand things themselves,  
just don't give them bad examples  
(Mattei T., in Fantone & Franciosi, 2009, p. 46, auth. trans.)

The day of the shooting is the day of celebration [...]  
children's voices are alive,  
you hear them proposing solutions and sensible reasons,  
making cheerful comments and laughter,  
shouting loud things to remember and numbers  
(Piccardo, 2025, p. 84, auth. trans.)

## 1. Partisan “Chicchi”

Teresa Mattei was born in Genoa in 1921 into a middle-class family with strong anti-fascist traditions. She grew up in an environment that allowed her to develop a strong political and social awareness, and with the outbreak of war she began to engage directly against the fascist regime. After the armistice between the Italian government and the Anglo-American forces in September 1943, and after the subsequent Nazi occupation of Italy, Mattei's experience of fascism as dictatorship, with its oppression and violation of civil rights, prompted her to actively join the Resistance struggle against the German occupation and the fascists of the Italian Social Republic (Pacini, 2009).

Her partisan activity, initially at a local level, developed more and more over the course of the war. Like many young men and women of the time, Teresa Mattei joined one of the groups fighting for the liberation of Italy and the construction of a democratic future. During the Resistance period, Mattei had the opportunity to confront a reality of armed struggle but also of deep civil commitment, coming into contact with the women's movement of the Resistance, which also allowed her to work for women's rights thanks to the Women's Defence Groups. During this experience, the partisan Mattei, a young graduate in philosophy, developed a political vision that accompanied her throughout her life: that of a fairer society, free from dictatorship and capable of guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities to all its citizens, starting with the most fragile (Soldani, 2006).

An important example of her commitment is the role she played in the approval process of the law on the right to vote for women, which in 1946 marked one of the milestones on the road to gender equality in Italy. The law guaranteed women the right to elect and be elected, and Mattei, representing the Communist Party, was the youngest of the 21 women to become part of the Constituent Assembly (Pacini, 2011).

Her political engagement focused in particular on the defence and expansion of women's rights, an issue that, at that time, was still considered marginal, but which Mattei helped to bring to the centre of political debate, since her participation in the Constituent Assembly. She was, in fact, the promoter of a substantial amendment to Article 3 of the Italian Constitution, succeeding in having the words '*de facto*' added to the initial text of the article<sup>1</sup>. In the work of the Constituent Assembly, Mattei not only worked for women's political participation, but was also actively involved in the promotion of social rights, such as those related to work and health, and advocated for the protection of mothers and in defence of minors. Elected as a member of Parliament, in 1947 she joined the staff of the Ente Nazionale per la Tutela Morale del Fanciullo (National Agency for the Moral Protection of Children), created in Florence by Benigno Di Tullio, a famous psychiatrist and criminologist. In

the post-war period, Mattei's political action and thought are characterised by her commitment to the protection of human rights and the creation of a fair, inclusive society that respects diversity. The struggle to overcome inequality therefore passes through the affirmation of the rights of the weakest, particularly women and children.

## **2. Children's rights and education as a tool for emancipation**

Mattei emphasised that every child, regardless of his or her origins, must be able to count on a better future, made up of opportunities for growth, education, and well-being. Her actions, therefore, contributed to orienting the political debate towards a more inclusive vision of children's rights, also bringing attention to issues concerning the protection of children in vulnerable situations, such as those living in poverty or in conflict contexts. Teresa Mattei was deeply convinced that only through a comprehensive and quality education was it possible for children to develop their individuality, acquire a critical sense and, above all, be able to actively participate in building a democratic society.

After the Second World War, Italy faced enormous challenges, and the school became a fundamental ground on which to build a new national identity. Mattei, like many other women involved in politics at the time, knew that education was the key to overcoming the divisions and injustices of the past. Her political action therefore translated into guaranteeing access to schooling for all, without distinction. Not only for children from poorer families, but also for girls, who were often denied the right to a full education. Her commitment was geared towards promoting school policies that encourage girls' access to high school and university, considering education a fundamental element of emancipation.

Mattei's experience as a partisan and her awareness of the suffering inflicted by war on the young also led her to become a spokesperson for the cause of protecting children from the atrocities of conflict. Teresa Mattei was clear about the fact that war was the main cause of the suffering of the new generations, deprived of a future of hope and progress. Indeed, in her public speeches and political actions, she tried to highlight how war destroyed first and foremost the possibility of a peaceful and dignified childhood, depriving children of the protection and care they need to grow up.

Her commitment to peace and child protection brought her to work continuously to make Italian society aware of the importance of building a world in which violence was replaced by dialogue, solidarity and international cooperation. The creation of a more peaceful society, and the protection of children and the most vulnerable was one of the fundamental aspects of Mattei's political commitment and action.

## **3. Cinema made by children**

In the late 1950s, after having given birth to her third child and with her marriage relationship now in crisis, Mattei lived for a year and a half in Costa Rica where she educated the two children of the Zingone family that hosted her; she then lived in Mexico with friends of the pedagogist Ivan Illich. On her return to Italy, further enriched by the comparison with other educational methods, she founded the Baby Mark workshop-studio in Milan, dedicated to consultancy on communication aimed at children. Mattei was increasingly convinced of the need to find new forms of expression that allowed a dialogue between the world of adults and that of children, in which the latter became protagonists.

Her commitment in the educational field underwent a significant turning point thanks to her meeting with Marcello Piccardo and his family, with whom she embarked on a joint project that proved decisive for the growth of educational cinema (Piccardo, 2015; *Lo studio di Monte Olimpino*). In Cardina, on the hill of Monte Olimpino, a district of Como, Mattei came into contact with important personalities from the cultural world

such as artist Bruno Munari, experimenter of tactile language in children's communication (Meneguzzo & Roffi, 2024), and Giovanni Belgrano, a teacher engaged in experimental research for didactics (Panizzi, 2009). In the decade 1962-1972, Piccardo, with Munari's collaboration, created an innovative environment where new approaches to film realization, production and distribution could be developed. The group, initially operating as a laboratory, transformed over time into a film research centre and in 1966 a film library was created in Como with the aim of using cinema as a 'means of expression appropriate to our time' (Piccardo, 1992, 22). This educational approach was part of a historical context in which cinema, together with other audio-visual media such as music, was considered a fundamental learning tool, involving students in an active and creative way. In 1967, Teresa Mattei was president of the Monte Olimpino cooperative group, an initiative aimed at the renewal of film techniques and their application for educational and experimental purposes.

These were the years in which cinema underwent a phase of great transformation: it was recognised as an art and developed throughout the world through various genres, it was at the same time an instrument of contestation, an expression of new trends and experimentation. The new stylistic and formal currents, born with a critical and innovative spirit, profoundly renewed the language of cinema and even pedagogues were able to understand the potential of this medium in the educational field. The preoccupation with a dangerous tool because 'children [may believe] that what they see at the cinema is a rough sample of reality' was supplanted by the progressive awareness that 'they must know that it is a language and they cannot truly know it until they experience this language themselves, in order to perceive it without being bewitched by it' (Binda, 2017, 32, auth. trans.).

Thanks to Mattei's vision and commitment, the project gave life to 'Il cinema fatto dai bambini' ('Cinema made by children') and became a unique experience in Italy that combined pedagogy and cinema, giving children the opportunity to express themselves freely through the medium of film.

The Monte Olimpino cooperative aimed to integrate realization, production and distribution of the movies, trying to avoid any interference from adults in order to respect the naturalness and creativity of children. In fact, one of the main objectives was to guarantee autonomous management by the children and teachers in the central phase of filmmaking, so as to allow total expressive freedom, without constraints and without judgement (Piccardo, 1992, 32).

The process described refers to an innovative educational approach by Munari, who is known for his method of creative stimulation in children. This method, characterised by a strong element of creative freedom, aims to stimulate children's imagination without imposing on them a rigid path to follow in order to freely explore and understand the world.

The working phases follow this process:

1. Initial phase: a stimulus is provided, such as an object, a character or a word, which can suggest a theme for the storytelling;
2. Creative development: the children are invited to elaborate the idea and invent a story around the thematic cue provided;
3. Practical realisation: the children then proceed with the realisation of the short film, using artistic techniques, drawing or manipulating objects, to transform their vision into a final product.
4. Sharing: finally, the children show the result of their work, which is often shared with the group or presented in a wider context (Sperati, 2020).

In the case of ‘Cinema made by children’, children were given a simple thematic cue that served as a starting point for the creation of a short film. Cinema thus became an alternative learning process and an emancipatory medium for cultural development, through which children could feel free to express feelings and emotions.

In the project we find Belgrano’s approach to experimentation, which, in supporting the activities of the Educational Cooperation Movement, considered the concrete experience of children to be fundamental. Creativity, said Belgrano, was achieved by leaving children ‘free to play with all the techniques of visual expression, without being told what they have to do. [...] The child uses all these tools, naturally experimenting with the techniques first and then as a moment of research and communication’ (Panizzi, 2009, 13, auth. trans.).

The children involved in the Monte Olimpino project came from different parts of Italy and, thanks to the use of cinema as a language, were made able to realise and understand a new, rich and infinite way of communicating. Cinema, unlike television, allowed children to play an active role in creation and decision-making, leading to surprising results even for adult audiences. Teresa Mattei wrote:

Allowing children to transform themselves from receivers into transmitters, can de-pollute the situation, at least for a moment, and allow the beginning of that alternative process that we all yearn for, preparing – starting from the very youngest – the consciousness and also the sure courage, fostered by the direct use of technical means, no longer “magic” but friends, of the need for everyone to be given the way, time and space to express what they have inside. [...] Where research cinema is freely made in schools, there is already a revolution: in every child, in every teacher, in every group and in every class; and there is no going back (Piccardo, 2025, p. 13, auth. trans.).

Despite bureaucratic and financial obstacles, such as strict school regulations and the high cost of the film and production, the project proceeded thanks to Mattei and Piccardo’s commitment and was enthusiastically welcomed by the schools and class groups who adopted it as a new form of teaching methodology.

The first screening of a film made by children took place on 11 September 1967: *La chitarra (The Guitar)* was shown in the primary school of Belgrano’s teaching circle. The five-minute black-and-white film is made by a group of 15 children with disabilities from the institute ‘La nostra famiglia’ in Bosisio Parini in the province of Como with teacher Gabriella Zamboni. The creative process started with the children choosing the object and its characteristics (shape, colour, weight and sound) through which to develop their different senses. *La chitarra (The Guitar)* shows the children discovering the instrument through touch and not just listening to its sound: the sound box and its reflections as well as the neck and the pulled strings attract them. The instrument is compared to other objects of similar shape but different use, such as a tennis racket or a rifle, and this shows how children have their own world view in which objects, shapes and colours take on different meanings (Scuola allo schermo – Monte Olimpino – Chitarra).

It is like passing – wrote Piccardo – from one world (that of the written word) to another (that of the moving image). Children know that these are two different worlds and they know and make the transition. The space of the word is its dimension on the paper, the space of the image is at least the space of its movement. In addition, the image needs extra space and time, for the benefit of the viewer (the word does not, the word is always there on the paper). These things that seem difficult for us to achieve, are easy for children to do. They do not forget that at the end the film is projected to others who previously knew nothing, and it is a matter of projecting images (movements, times

and spaces) that are easy to understand. Children succeed brilliantly where we adults fail resoundingly in incommunicability (Piccardo, 2025, p. 44, auth. trans.).

The work represented an unprecedented and innovative project that fit into a context of learning and growth, aiming to develop crucial skills such as reasoning, problem solving, managing the unexpected, and coordinating a group. Teresa Mattei was a fundamental pillar of this project, demonstrating an approach in her work that went far beyond cinema and highlighted her concern for childhood and the full realisation of children's rights. The project, initially rejected by Italian television RAI, took off after acceptance by the national television network and the screening of the film in the programme TV7. Bruno Ambrosi, television editor in Milan, immediately recognised the extraordinary value of the work done and even the newspaper "Il Giorno" dedicated a large colour page to the film, edited by Munari with drawings by the children who worked on *La chitarra* (*The Guitar*). The film was then screened in Varese, at a psychiatric centre, where Dr. Eugenio Gaburri realised the applicability of the psychological method to group therapy and began to use it with his patients. A relevant aspect was the collaboration with IBM (International Business Machines) in Milan, which, using computers, projected *La chitarra* (*The Guitar*) together with the films of the American Bell Telephone. The combination of cinema and new technology highlighted how children and computers had ways of processing and producing a result that went beyond the superstructures of adulthood. In 1968, the film was screened at the 'Carlo Erba' cultural centre in Milan, attracting the attention of experts in the field, communication and training professionals, and researchers. At the first screening, Marcello Cesa Bianchi, director of the Institute of Psychology of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Milan, commented enthusiastically in front of a packed hall: 'This is a new road for psychology', recognising the project's innovation and potential (Piccardo, 2025, 83, auth. trans.). Thus, the work of Teresa Mattei and the Monte Olimpino group turned out to be an initiative that not only influenced cinema, transforming it into an educational and expressive tool, but also psychology, communication and education, leaving an important mark in the history of culture and research.

One of the most significant moments of this path was the interest of Cesare Zavattini, with whom Teresa Mattei shared a constant commitment to peace (the director was in fact awarded the World Peace Prize in 1955) (Cirillo, 2023). Zavattini proposed to the Monte Olimpino group the creation of a 'free newsreel' in the wake of the free newsreels project, an independent and collective film initiative focused on social and political issues. The project was inspired by the *Cinegiornale della pace* (*Peace Newsreel*), conceived by Zavattini himself in 1963 with the main idea of involving a broader audience than that of cinema theatres, making spectators not only viewers, but also conscious and free authors.

The project obviously involved children as authors – over 300 of them – because as Piccardo wrote: 'if we start with the children to liberate, all cinema becomes free; if you give this medium into the hands of children, they know how to do it; if you don't tell them what to do, they do it better than you do; if you don't tell them to make politics and which, they, the children, make radically political cinema' (Piccardo, 2025, 84).

The newsreel was sent to the Pesaro International Film Festival, but it was not screened. The event and avant-garde cinema were ideally close to the Sixty-Eight protests and social movements, and screenings were interrupted due to police charges (Tonelli, 2018). In this political clash, there was no place for children, who had to wait until the Festival del Cinema Nuovo in Carrara to return to the forefront with the screening of the *Cinegiornale libero di Monte Olimpino* (*Free Newsreel of Monte Olimpino*); but the most important showcase for this new approach to cinema was undoubtedly the Venice Film Festival. In Venice, *La chitarra* (*The Guitar*), *Il pagliaccio* (*The Clown*), *La scatola chiusa* (*The Closed Box*) and *Il vecchietto* (*The Little Old Man*) are presented.



The silent film *Il pagliaccio* (*The Clown*), realized by the children of the first ‘differential class’<sup>2</sup> of the Cassago Brianza primary school, with teacher Teresa Petri, unlike other films does not show children as protagonists on the screen: the young authors’ gaze investigates the transformation of ‘a normal man’ with a ‘clean face’ who paints himself like a clown to make people laugh. The idea stems from everyday experience: on carnival days there were masks for sale and the children decided to focus on one of them, managing to narrate how the clown mask is a dress like any other (Scuola allo schermo – Monte Olimpino – Pagliaccio). Children are instead at the centre of the narrative in *La scatola chiusa* (*The Closed Box*) another silent film. Each of the 14 children of the first differential primary class contributed to the film proposing a subject and the 14 short stories formed the plot of the film. The movie revolves around a large closed box on a desk, and the question is: what is inside? Each child takes a different object out of the box: Some find a doll, a toy car, some coal or waste paper, some find nothing (like Luciana crying), and some find a new dress to try on in the mirror before going to church (Scuola allo schermo – Monte Olimpino – Scatola). In *Il vecchietto* (*The Little Old Man*), realized by the first class of the primary school of Cantù, the children portrayed again their everyday life by placing a common man and life passing by at the centre of the story (Piccardo, 2025, 31-34).

Initially received with perplexity, but then positively assessed by director Luigi Chiarini, the films chosen for the Festival in Venice were an example of pedagogical and educational experimentation that was part of a new climate in which filmmakers expressed libertarian ideas, contributing to the growth of critical and innovative thinking and the affirmation of the value of the individual. The Monte Olimpino group accompanied the films with a clear presentation: ‘In the name of the children authors we do not contest anything, we intend to propose the films in the festival [...], because we know that they, made for adults, must be seen by adults, in the venue that adult culture will be able to set up for a new cinema, as new as possible’ (Piccardo, 2025, 87).

From a pedagogical point of view, the film education activities carried out at Monte Olimpino were characterised by a strong focus on aesthetics and expression, as is evident from the texts and films available online. Unlike other school filmmaking experiences of the same years, where the documentary or informative component prevailed, at Monte Olimpino the creative aspect and expressive exploration were privileged. In particular, Elvira Vincelli, who made a significant contribution to the psycho-pedagogical elaboration of the experience, emphasised how this structure made it possible to produce different cognitive-expressive forms, without excluding some in favour of others, but integrating them all in a potentially infinite process. In this way, children were offered the possibility of expanding their expression and theoretical research, opening up horizons of creativity and learning without defined limits (Vincelli, 1975, 50). This approach favoured the dissemination of the Monte Olimpino experiment, which soon became internationally known: television troupes arrived from all over Europe to understand the processes of elaboration and production, and alongside the film activities made by children and for children, the group also began to work on a research cinema about children but made by adults.

Recognition from pedagogues did not take long to arrive. In Florence, at a meeting organised by the publisher La Nuova Italia Lamberto Borghi, director of the Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Florence, who sincerely appreciated the ‘Il cinema fatto dai bambini’ (‘Cinema made by children’), recognised its value as a pedagogical tool. The same interest was expressed by Antonio Santoni Rugiu, Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Florence, who planned a visit to Monte Olimpino (Piccardo, 2025, 93-94, 98-99). Film screenings (25 films were realized between 1967 and 1970) followed one after the other throughout Italy and paved the way for the group’s participation in seminars and conferences involving pedagogues (the aforementioned Borghi and Rugiu in Florence, but also Bruno Ciari in Bologna, Luigi Volpicelli and Mauro Laeng in Rome), teachers,

communication experts, parents and children, a sign of the increasing and widespread interest in experimentation in the educational use of audiovisuals (Belgrano, 1973 and 1984).

In the meantime, the relationship between Teresa Mattei and Marcello Piccardo, who were also romantically linked, soured. She did not feel fully valued and therefore decided to leave him, although they remained friends, and moved permanently to Pisa where she continued to work in the field of educational cinema, using films as a tool for the integration of the weakest.

In the Tuscan city, Mattei collaborated with director Paolo Benvenuti, former assistant to Roberto Rossellini, and the 'CinemaZero' collective, continuing to produce films made by children. In 1971, she contributed to the production of three films on the occasion of the First Biennial of Children's Cinema: *L'evasione del secolo* (*The Escape of the Century*), with the students of the 'Marconi' middle school in Pisa, *Per una scuola diversa* (*For a Different School*), and *La partita di pallone* (*The Football Game*), with the students of the 'Pacinotti' middle school in Pontedera. These projects represent one of the most significant expressions of Mattei's commitment to innovative education, centred on the active participation of children and the use of the media as a tool for social inclusion (Pacini, 2009, 198-199).

#### **4. The Lega per il diritto dei bambini alla comunicazione (League for the Right of Children to Communication). From television to the experience of 'Radio Bambina' ('Radio Little Girl')**

In 1987, Teresa Mattei founded the League for the Right of Children to Communication, launching an educational challenge centred on the importance of communication and free expression for children. The motto, 'I ask to be heard', reflected Mattei's conviction that it was crucial to give children 'a voice', that for too long had been denied them. Mattei believed that children were born complete, with a potential that had to be enhanced and brought out, without the need to add anything. Education should be the process of discovering and enhancing the innate capacities of every child. This is why the image of a green sprout created by Bruno Munari was chosen as symbol of the League: Its layers represented life growing, and its capacity to become any kind of tree symbolised children's right to express themselves freely. Adults were invited to accompany children in their growth, as stated in Article 3 of the League's Statute: children have the right to communicate and adults the duty to listen to them (Pacini, 2009, 218).

The League promoted numerous educational initiatives and projects that aimed to raise children's awareness of the use of the media, seeking to provide them with tools for conscious expression. Mattei's innovative perspective also focused on the most vulnerable groups, promoting integration and cooperation between children from different social backgrounds.

A central element of her educational approach was the use of creative workshops, which allowed children to freely explore and develop artistic skills in a playful context. These workshops were designed to stimulate children's curiosity and imagination, involving them in practical experimentation with new materials and techniques. Teresa Mattei relied heavily on visual and manual experience as a means of introducing children to creative and artistic language. Her idea was that, through the manipulation of materials and the use of artistic techniques, children could improve their ability to express themselves, particularly through the language of images. The League for the Children's Right to Communication, which over time had more than a hundred members in Italy and abroad, had a significant impact in promoting a vision of education as a tool to form free and conscious individuals. Mattei's work contributed to the understanding that art, as the highest and most personal form of visual communication, could be a powerful means to develop freedom of expression and awareness in children, preparing them to become adults capable of facing the world with creativity and critical thinking. Mattei shared with Munari the idea that art of discovery and freedom of expression were stimulated through



the workshop form in which children learned by playing, in the full realisation of active pedagogy (Panizzi, 2009).

Self-financed and without sponsors, the League immediately set itself the goal of countering the damaging effects of television, which, according to Mattei, was destroying communication in the family, the place where children should have been free to listen to stories and build stories. Families had therefore to be made aware of the importance of a conscious use of television and parents were invited to rediscover the value of verbal communication with their children, which had been supplanted by the television medium. To this end, the League decided to ask the Ministry of Education to introduce at least one hour and a half a week dedicated to the proper use of television in school programs: since the medium occupied a significant part of children's time, it should have been treated as a regular teaching subject, parallel to other school subjects.

In 1989, a list of positive actions was submitted to the Permanent Commission on Constitutional Affairs. Among the most provocative proposals was a request addressed to RAI and private broadcasters: a 'television truce' once a week, i.e. a black-out of programming to reduce the impact of television on families (Simonetti, 1989, 79).

To promote a conscious use of television, Teresa Mattei, together with her sister Ida, organised an intergenerational meeting in Montecatini Terme, that soon became an annual event. Under the patronage of public bodies such as Tuscany Region and the Municipality of Montecatini, as well as the Italian Committee for Children's Play, Mattei promoted seminars characterised by an innovative and workshop approach, different from traditional educational methodologies. During these events, thousands of children, parents, teachers, pedagogues and media experts gathered for two days of fun, learning, discussion and reflection. An attempt was made to stimulate reflection on the time that parents devoted to listening to their children and how television could invade family territory, replacing direct communication with a medium that was no longer a tool for entertainment and communication, but an alibi for not interacting.

The title of the initiative, 'What game shall we play? To invent a new world with our children!' reflected the intention of the event, which invited families to rethink their relationship with television and to create a new way of interacting and communicating with the youngest. The festival thus became an opportunity to play, reflect and discover the importance of sharing experiences. Each workshop was an opportunity for growth and the city of transformed in a space for play. The school premises, the Imperiale cinema theatre, the congress palace and the thermal baths park became places/non-places of a path of educational enrichment (Pacini, 2009, 215-216). The contribution of Danilo Dolci, with whom Mattei collaborated for a long time, turned out to be fundamental and in his words we find the profound meaning of that work:

I believe that technology is important, but technological domination is dangerous because it makes people passive. Creativity is not a problem of Einstein or J. S. Bach. Creativity is a deep-seated need of everyone that should be taken into account and enhanced in every school and non-school centre [...] Creativity is totally necessary to the point that if it is not developed people feel a desperate emptiness within themselves that they fill with drugs. Drugs are actually the expression of missed relationships (Lega per il diritto dei bambini alla comunicazione, 1989, auth. trans.).

Dolci proposed a workshop starting with a question: children were asked to draw dreams influenced by television, while parents discussed the experience of a 'television truce'. Other workshops included activities ranging from dance to game, such as Lele Lutazzi's 'Giocare viaggiando' ('Playing while traveling), Munari's 'LudoArte' ('LudicArt') and Laura Frigerio's bookmaking; there were also science and technology workshops, approached

through colours. The most appreciated workshop among children was the one that allowed them to enter the classroom through the window, and captured their attention by involving them in a word game that combined fairy tale narration with concrete reality (Pacini, 2009, 217).

In 1995, as part of the League's activities, the idea of 'Radio Bambina' ('Radio Little Girl') – a radio station designed to give children a voice – was developed. The project, inspired by an initiative supported by Coop Toscana for Bosnian children missing during the war in ex-Yugoslavia, was realised thanks to the help of Mattei's son, Rocco Muzio, who in the 1990s collaborated with his mother in all her activities. Radio Bambina's broadcasts officially began in October 1997 with the aim of arousing emotions in children. The cue was taken from the statement of a child: 'I am richer with the radio because I can take a trip to the moon', showing that he understood the difference between radio and television. Radio Bambina's slogan, 'from image to imagination, from word to thought', fully expressed the aims of the broadcasts, and the radio was part of a macro-project dedicated to children, supported by funds from national Law 285/97 and local actors in Pisa and Valdera.

'Radio Bambina', which began to broadcast once a week on Punto Radio in Cascina, marked a historic moment: for the first time in Italy children had the right to speak in a radio context. Speech and emotion, according to Mattei, were fundamental tools for growth and awareness. Radio, as a means of communication, helped to awaken emotions that were often lost, especially in the age of television. 'Radio Bambina' also broadcast from Ponsacco and Florence, thanks to collaboration with free radio stations, and was part of the development of the innovative experience of free radios that proliferated in Italy with the liberalisation of broadcasting in the local area in 1976 (Ferretti, 1997).

A number of public and private organisations and institutions contributed to the success of the project. The initiative also included courses for teachers, organised in collaboration with the Provveditorato agli studi of Pisa and aiming at teaching them how to use the radio to stimulate children to express themselves correctly, through voice and emotions. 'Radio Bambina' was unique on the Italian radio scene, since RAI produced no children's programme and the broadcasts of private radio stations were often unsuitable for the emotional and educational needs of children. Mattei's radio project, therefore, proposed itself as a quality educational initiative for children, creating a communication space, far from commercial messages and focused on expression and listening. It furthermore created an active and sustainable context in which inclusion and creativity went hand in hand. Mattei emphasised the importance of getting children used to authentic communication, to help them to overcome superficial communication prevailing in a society without listening and without dialogue. Radio, as an educational tool, thus became a means of growth and awareness. Mattei's collaboration with Danilo Dolci, a great expert in communication, is recognisable in the 'Radio Bambina' project, in which the process of 'communicating' was emphasised over that of 'transmitting' (Dolci, 1988).

Teresa Mattei and her son Rocco participated in the 1998 national conference on childhood and adolescence in Florence, where, moving from the experience of 'Radio Bambina' they discussed the relationship between mass media and new generations, deepening the theme 'From image to imagination, from word to thought'. With 77, Mattei still wanted to participate in the debate about children and youth, convinced of the importance 'of freedom of expression and pedagogy, [...] of learning to be responsible and free, through exchange with previous generations, with those who live close to us' (Fantoni & Franciosi, 2009, 46 auth. trans.).

## 5. Conclusion

Mattei's legacy is still a reference point for those scholars and educators interested in the defence of children's rights and inclusive education. Her vision of society, centred on the values of social justice, equality and solidarity, can serve as a model for modern public policies, which should consider welfare of children as a priority.

Mattei's engagement for a free and quality education, for the protection of children's rights and for the promotion of peace and democracy continues to inspire generations of educators, politicians and citizens because she understood that the future of a country depends on how its children are treated and educated, and she dedicated her life to guaranteeing them a future of hope and opportunity.

## Note

1. All citizens possess equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion and political orientation, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove economic and social obstacles which, by limiting *de facto* the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the natural person and the actual participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country (Constitution of the Italian Republic, English text, Article 3).
2. 'Differential classes' were classes for children with special learning or emotional needs.

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