Fondazione
Reggio Children
Centro Loris Malaguzzi

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PLR

PLAY
EXPLORE
RESEARCH

The future of learning

Conference proceedings

Billund — Denmark

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Aesthetics of education
Directed by Annamaria Contini
and Lorenzo Manera

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Summary

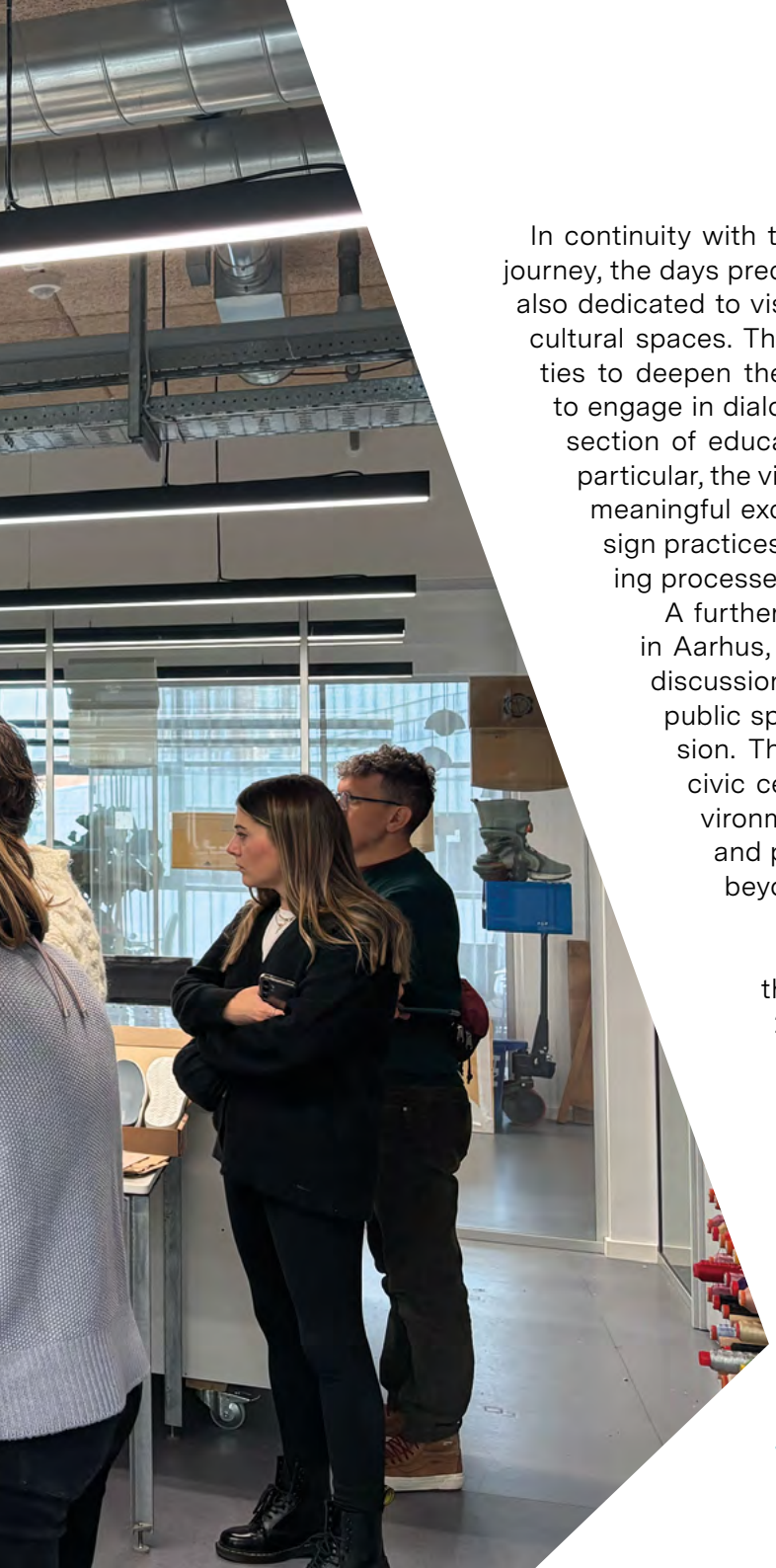
Introduction

The seventh and final conference-action of *P.E.R. – Play Explore Research*, held in Billund from 20 to 22 November 2025, marked a moment of particular significance, both symbolically and historically. P.E.R. originated from the research collaboration on playful learning between Fondazione Reggio Children and The LEGO Foundation, a partnership grounded in a long-standing relationship of commitment for children's rights. Returning to Billund for the conclusion of this journey meant reconnecting with a territory that has been deeply intertwined with the educational history of Reggio Emilia for decades.

The Billund conference-action thus represented the final stage of the *P.E.R. Convening Educators* journey, but also the culmination of a broader process of collective research and learning. Over the course of the project, conference-actions took place in Reggio Emilia, Brazil, South Africa, Colorado (USA), Kenya, and Vietnam, engaging educators, researchers, policymakers, institutions, and communities across diverse cultural and geographical contexts.

Through these encounters, P.E.R. has grown into a global platform for exchange, fostering new educational communities and strengthening a culture of playful learning as an inclusive, research-based educational strategy.


adler



In continuity with the approach adopted throughout the P.E.R. journey, the days preceding the conference-action in Billund were also dedicated to visits and meetings with local institutions and cultural spaces. These encounters offered valuable opportunities to deepen the understanding of the Danish context and to engage in dialogue with professionals working at the intersection of education, design, culture, and youth policies. In particular, the visit to the Kolding School of Design enabled a meaningful exchange on *Play Design*, highlighting how design practices can support playful and participatory learning processes across different age groups.

A further significant moment was the visit to DOKK1 in Aarhus, a landmark civic and cultural center, where discussions focused on youth policies and the role of public spaces in fostering creativity and social inclusion. The exchange emphasized how libraries and civic centers can function as open, accessible environments that support young people's agency and provide opportunities for creative expression beyond formal educational settings.

The conference-action itself took place at the International School of Billund, opened in 2013 and progressively developed over the years, with a curriculum grounded in the International Baccalaureate educational framework. The choice of this school as the host venue was particularly meaningful, as it functioned not only as the setting for the conference-action but also as a living educational environment that further enriched reflection on the physical and conceptual de-

sign of innovative spaces for formal education. The school's learning environments, organizational choices, and spatial configurations offered participants an opportunity to reflect on how architecture, pedagogy, and everyday practice can support collaboration and learning through play.

Together, these experiences situated the Billund conference-action within a broader ecosystem of learning, design, and civic engagement, reinforcing the importance of place-based dialogue and cross-sector collaboration in imagining the future of education.

This conference-action was dedicated to the memory of Carla Rinaldi, former President of Fondazione Reggio Children, pedagogista, researcher, and lifelong learner. A tireless advocate for children's rights until her very last day, Carla Rinaldi was a central theorist of the pedagogy of listening and a global promoter of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Dedicating the Billund gathering to her memory represents both a tribute and a responsibility: to carry forward her legacy of dialogue, reciprocity, and ethical commitment toward childhood.

Growing new worlds,
what do you see in the future
of education?

The opening plenary of the *Play Explore Research* conference-action in Billund marked a central space of collective reflection and dialogue on the future of learning. It took place on World Children's Day, commemorated annually on November 20th, marking both the adoption of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (1959) and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). This intentional choice underscored a central message of the conference: children's rights are not abstract principles, they are living commitments that must be continuously renewed and enacted through educational and political decisions.

In fact, inspired by the Reggio Emilia educational experience, the P.E.R. project promotes an idea of childhood not as a time of fragility and dependence. Children are seen as rich in potential, curiosity, and intelligence, capable of constructing meaning in relationships with others, with materials, with ideas, and with the world. Upholding this image of the child calls upon adults, educators, researchers, institutions, and communities, to actively nurture children's rights and create the conditions in which they can flourish.

The opening plenary brought together a group of highly authoritative voices in the field of education: Camilla Uhre Fog (Director of the International School of Billund),

Francesco Profumo (President of Fondazione Reggio Children), Mitch Resnick (LEGO Papert Professor at the MIT Media Lab), Ricarose Roque (Associate Professor at the University of Colorado Boulder), and Harold Gothson (Founder of the Reggio Emilia Institutet and member of the Board of Fondazione Reggio Children). Their diverse perspectives, spanning educational leadership, research, innovation, and international experience, contributed to a rich and multifaceted dialogue. The plenary was moderated and animated by Barbara Donnici, Project Manager of Play Explore Research.

The plenary was structured in two complementary parts. In the first, the invited speakers, each deeply engaged as advocates for children, offered reflections grounded in their own research and professional experience, responding to a question asked by Carla Rinaldi during the P.E.R. conference-action in Denver: *"What do you see in the future of education?"*

In the second part, this shared provocation opened a collective reflection on creativity, democratic learning, and ethical questions, with the aim of imagining forms of education that are more human and connected.

Barbara Donnici
P.E.R. Project Manager,
Fondazione Reggio Children


November 20-22, 2025 | International School of Billund

Camilla Uhre Fog

Head of School at the International School of Billund

You asked me about the future of education, and I feel incredibly privileged to see it every day. I see it in the eyes of the children at ISB. That may sound a little sentimental or fluffy, but it's truly how I feel. When I work with students, and when my teachers work with them every day, we witness how they become empowered, how they dare to ask questions, how they explore, and how, if we step aside, they can take the learning into their own hands and even teach us many things. Of course, guidance is still important, but the future is already here in their curiosity and initiative.

I see it not just in the kindergarten students, but also in our middle schoolers. When we embrace learning through play, it's easy to agree that it's crucial for three- to five-year-olds.

It's somewhat important for six- to nine-year-olds, but then comes the discussions and challenges… and that's exactly why maintaining a playful mindset is so important. We need to continue nurturing young minds, helping them grow while staying independent thinkers. And at ISB, we see that we succeed. Our graduates return to visit us, often around lunchtime, and they still have that light in their eyes. They tell us that they are good at making friends, at solving problems, at initiating tasks and assignments, and, importantly, that they feel their voice matters.

And I think that is central to the future of education: students knowing that their voice matters, that they are empowered, and that their curiosity and joy remain alive. Seeing this every day is my privilege as a practitioner. Others can research it, but we see it daily in our classrooms, in our students, and in the graduates who return to share their experiences.

So, that's my brief contribution, just a reminder that the future of education is already unfolding in the present, in the minds and hearts of the students we have the privilege to work with.


Fondazione
Reggio Children
Centro Loris Malaguzzi
The Hundred languages in the Age of AI
Francesco Profumo, President of Fondazione Reggio Children
P.E.R.
Play
Explore
Research
The future of learning

Francesco Profumo

President of Fondazione Reggio Children

Thank you for the invitation, and thank you for this wonderful event here in Billund.

This is my first visit here, and I was truly impressed by what you have developed in this school and by the level of competence and vision you demonstrate in the field of education. I would like to spend just a few minutes reflecting together on the relationship between the Industrial Revolutions, the way people live and work, and the educational systems that emerged alongside them. As you know, today we are living in what is often described as the fourth Industrial Revolution.

The first Industrial Revolution took place between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was characterized by the introduction of a new form of energy and new production systems, and it lasted a long time, around 80 or 90 years. One of its major outcomes was the reduction of human muscular labor. As a consequence, working hours gradually decreased, from about 44 to 42 hours per week. This period also brought profound changes to society: the first trains, early forms of automobiles, and major transformations in infrastructure, including roads and transportation networks.

The second Industrial Revolution occurred between the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was driven by electrical energy, something we still see all around us today. Its effects were similar: again, a reduction in muscular labor and a further decrease in working hours. This revolution also lasted roughly 90 years.

The third Industrial Revolution emerged toward the end of the 20th century, between the late 1900s and the early 2000s. This time, the defining factor was not a new form of energy, but automation. Once again, the outcome was a reduction in human physical labor and in the number of working days or hours per week. These three revolutions share important similarities, including their long duration, often more than 50 years.

From an educational and pedagogical perspective, this historical context shaped a very specific model of life: people went to school for a limited period, worked for most of their lives, and then retired. What they learned during school was generally considered sufficient for an entire lifetime. Of course, there were exceptions, such as researchers or professors, but for most people, education was concentrated at the beginning of life.

Today, however, something fundamentally different is happening. The fourth Industrial Revolution is expected to be much shorter, perhaps 20 years, or even less. It is not defined by a new form of energy,

but by the collaboration between the human brain and artificial intelligence. Once again, we anticipate a reduction in working hours, but this time the consequences will not be evenly distributed. Because this revolution is so rapid, people will need to return to education many times throughout their lives.

This represents a significant challenge. Learning later in life is not the same as learning when you are young. For this reason, during the first phase of schooling, it becomes essential to learn how to learn again, to develop the capacity for lifelong learning. This is a crucial step toward navigating the future.

A second, equally important point concerns time. The reduction in working hours cannot simply translate into more free time; part of this time will need to be dedicated to education. People will need opportunities to return to learning, to reskill, and to rethink their relationship with knowledge.

I offer these reflections simply as a framework. I hope that during the discussion we will have the opportunity to go deeper, into what this means, for example, for the “hundred languages” of children in our schools and in yours, and into how education systems around the world may need to change in response to this new reality.

Thank you.

Mitchel Resnick

LEGO Papert Professor of Learning Research at the MIT Media Lab

I called my group at MIT the Lifelong Kindergarten Group. When I think about the future of education, I hope it will be more like kindergarten. Over the years, my visits to Reggio Emilia have been a deep source of inspiration. I've seen children working, learning, and playing together in ways that are playful, collaborative, and full of creativity.

In that environment, children explore and create in partnership with each other. Too often, as they move through school, they end up sitting in rows, filling out worksheets, and listening to lectures. That approach may teach facts, but it doesn't teach what's most needed in today's world. Kindergarten, however, nurtures creative, curious, caring, and collaborative learners, qualities that are essential for thriving in a rapidly changing society.

These qualities have always mattered, but today they are especially critical. Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, is transforming society at an unprecedented pace. While it offers enormous possibilities, it also carries risks: automating tasks in ways that could narrow human choice rather than expand it. At the same time, political disruptions, including the rise of au-

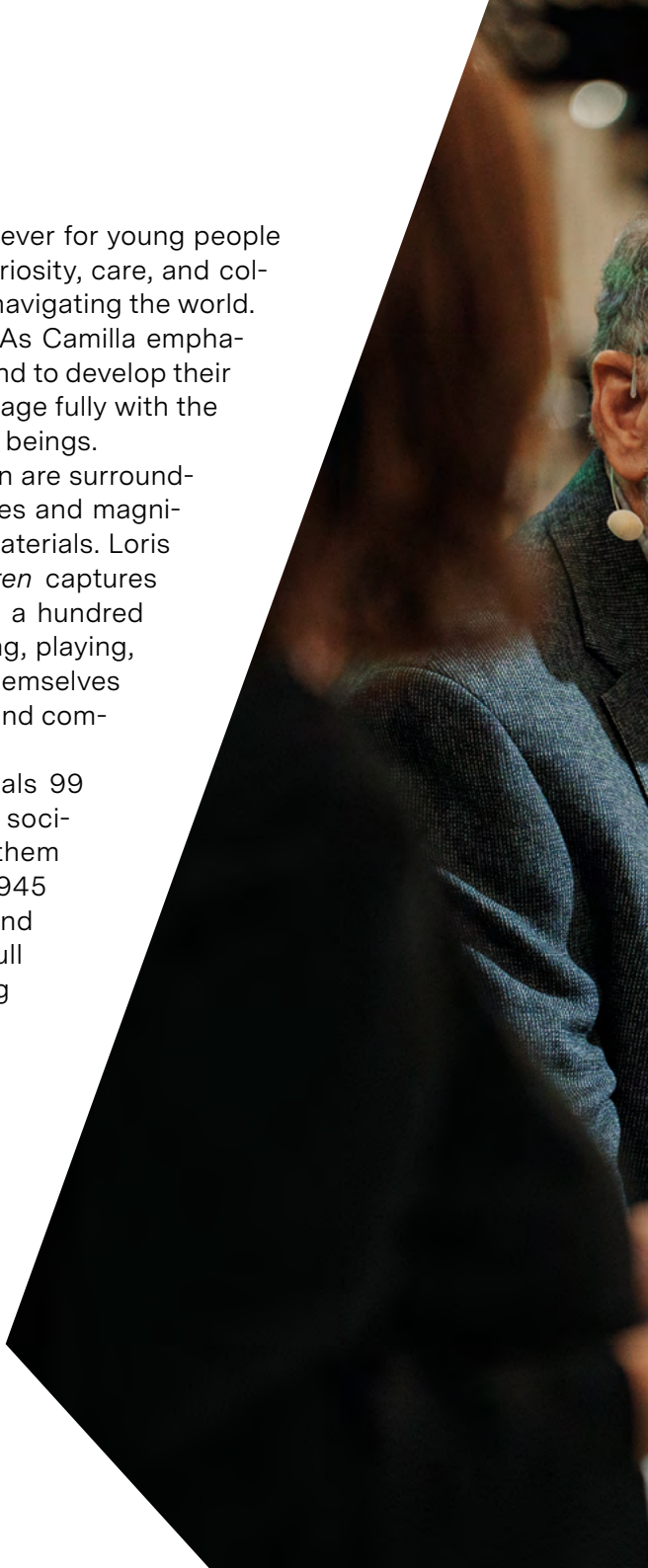
thoritarian governments, make it more important than ever for young people to develop their most human capacities. Creativity, curiosity, care, and collaboration are not luxuries, they are essential tools for navigating the world.

Choice and voice are central to this development. As Camilla emphasized, children need the opportunity to make choices and to develop their voice, to express ideas, explore their interests, and engage fully with the world. This is what allows them to grow as fully human beings.

Reggio classrooms illustrate this beautifully. Children are surrounded by materials for investigating the world, microscopes and magnifying glasses, and for creating: paints, clay, building materials. Loris Malaguzzi's poem *The Hundred Languages of Children* captures this spirit perfectly: a child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, playing, and speaking. Every child should be able to express themselves in many ways, reflecting the diversity of how we learn and communicate.

Yet Malaguzzi also warned that society often steals 99 of these languages. Too many traditional schools and societal systems limit children's opportunities and push them toward conformity. The Reggio schools, founded in 1945 as a response to fascism in Italy, emphasized voice and choice, ensuring that children could develop their full potential. Today, we face similar challenges. Helping children nurture their hundred languages, supporting creativity, expression, and choice, is more important than ever.

And this will be a big effort, but this, to me, is what's most important for the future of education, for all of us, for parents, for educators, for developers, for researchers, for policymakers, for everyone to come together to make sure that children can grow up in a world where they really can develop those hundred voices. Thank you.



Ricarose Roque

Associate Professor at CU Boulder

Thank you for having me. My name is Ricarose Roque, and I am a professor in Colorado. When asked about the future of education, I want to share an example from our research group. I lead the Creative Communities Research Group, where we engage youth and families in creative, joyful, and playful learning experiences with computing.

When I talk about the "communities" aspect, I mean learning as a shared endeavor across the social spheres of a child's life, their families, peers, educators, and the network of organizations they move through. One project we run, called Family Creative Learning, invites entire families to learn and create together with new technologies. It is a series of workshops, run in partnership with community-based organizations, and follows a four-part structure: eat, meet, make, and share.

We start with dinner, something familiar that brings the family together. Then we meet, connecting with peers, sharing questions, concerns, and strategies. Next, families

make a hands-on project inspired by their own interests. Finally, they share their creations, explaining them in their own words.

Through developing this program, my team and I have learned a vital lesson: building relationships is just as important as building projects. Strengthening connections is embedded in every part of the experience. One of the most exciting outcomes is seeing how parents and children begin to see themselves, and each other, differently in the context of computing.

One mother shared: *"My son was surprised I could do it. He thought I couldn't do anything on the computer. When he saw that I made something, he was amazed. He probably expected I'd be lost, but I wasn't. I got it together."* Experiences like this show children that parents can be curious, creative, and even vulnerable in learning, and parents, in turn, see their children's creativity and potential. Technology becomes not a source of fear, but a tool for expression and connection within the family.

And it's not just families who learn. Educators, staff from community organizations, volunteers, and local students also participate, and they learn about the families and communities around them. One former teacher reflected: *"For the first time, I connected with a student in a way that never happened before. I saw their curiosity and joy, and I realized I hadn't seen that side of the parents either."* In traditional learning settings, parent-teacher interactions are often limited to conferences or problem situations. This more expansive approach reshapes how educators think about learning and community.

We also involve pre-service teachers, teachers in training, helping facilitate these workshops. For them, it is a powerful shift: learning that is not just about technology, but learning with technology; teaching that strengthens relationships and community rather than simply delivering content.

When I imagine the future of education, I see it as a collective endeavor. Traditional settings often focus on the individual, but the real work involves parents, teachers, community organizations, all creating structures that reflect the values and aspirations we hold for children.

I'll close with thoughts from a few people who have influenced our approach. Seymour Papert, for example, said that *"the role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention, rather than provide ready-made knowledge."* This philosophy underpins the way we engage youth and families with technology.

Yet in working with families, especially those marginalized in traditional settings, I feel that Papert's insight only begins to capture the full experience. I love a ques-

tion posed by Nanda Marin at UCLA: *"How do we create the conditions to love each other?"* By love, I don't mean romantic feelings, but the intentional, conscious love that Bell Hooks describes, a choice to love ourselves and each other.

So, when I think about the future of education, I see it as a matter of creating conditions to love each other, especially as we face emerging disruptions and undertake the work of rebuilding our communities together. Thank you.

Harold Göthson

Board Member of Fondazione Reggio Children and Senior Advisor at the Reggio Emilia Institutet

I'm Swedish, but I will speak in English. My mother was born in the United States, so English is my mother tongue as well. Sometimes, when I speak English, it feels more emotional for me; Swedish is more rational. What I want to say today has not been easy to choose. When you are almost eighty years old, you carry many experiences, perspectives, and projects. But I wanted to focus on something I believe is essential for this conference: the classroom level.

How is the everyday life of the classroom related to the big words we use: democracy, citizenship, participation? What is the relationship between these concepts and what actually happens with children every day? That is what I want to focus on now.

First, I want to say that I am an old friend of Carla. We have grown older together, and I have learned a great deal from her, especially about what Mitch spoke about earlier: the image of the child. In her book "In dialogue with Reggio Emilia", Carla writes that *the child is rich if*, and that *if* is us. It depends on how we, as adults, as teachers, as systems, relate to children.

This is also relevant when we talk about artificial intelligence. Whether AI becomes something good or something harmful depends on how we, the system, relate to it. For more than 35 years, I have worked with people in Reggio Emilia and learned a great deal. One thing I have learned is that many of the questions I encountered there for the first time are more important today than ever.

We live in a world that no longer supports our way of thinking in the same way it did when I began my work in the late 1980s and 1990s. That makes this conference particularly important. We are in a more challenging situation today than we were some years ago. And the fact that this conference is an act of participation matters greatly. This is not a preaching conference. You give, we give, and together we try to find dialogue, to learn together how to face the difficult challenges of our time.

For most schools in the future, the challenge remains the same: to believe in and act for an education that fosters democratic, sustainable citizenship. These are strong words, but for most schools, they represent the most important issue for the future. We also need frameworks, support, and resources, from above and around us, that allow for lifelong learning, as Francesco mentioned earlier.

My guiding question today is this: what are the challenges for those of us who want to value childhood, see children as citizens,

and recognize the revolutionary power of their question "*why"*? Children carry that question with them: *Why is it like this? Why do you do it this way?* They challenge us, especially the youngest citizens.

For me, the central challenge is understanding the relationship between the big values of democracy and the micro-society that every group of children represents. Here, the teacher plays a crucial role. John Dewey already emphasized this: democracy does not exist in the abstract, it lives in micro-societies.

A democratic school is not defined by what it says about democracy, but by what children experience every day. Every group of children forms a small democratic society where four core values must be lived.

First, the value of every unique voice.

Second, diversity as a value.

Third, interdependence, the need to negotiate, to understand that we hold different perspectives as we learn together.

And fourth, the right to change one's mind.

These values must be lived in schools, not preached. We are not creating democratic citizens through instruction; we are creating democratic schools where children encounter diversity and reflect on their own responses to it. You see these values in the smallest moments: when children compare eyes, leaves, stones; when they negotiate self-initiated activities; when they listen to one another. This is democracy in action.

Values are experienced, not taught. Democracy grows from encounters, not slogans. Children learn democracy by observing differences, asking questions, negotiating meaning, and realizing that all voices matter. This is the *big* in the *small*. The everyday decisions teachers make shape society and shape schools for all children, if we truly want democracy.

Another key idea is playfulness and shared inquiry. A democratic pedagogy encourages playfulness in both child-initiated and adult-initiated activities. Playfulness creates space for exploring diversity, forming relationships, imagining alternatives, and negotiating rules. Vygotsky understood this well. Adults must support creativity and experimentation as legitimate ways of knowing, fundamental to democratic learning processes.

Democratic learning also requires a reflective culture. Children's questions, especially "*why"*, must be welcomed. In too many schools, "*why"* is answered with "*because"*, shutting down inquiry. Instead, adults and children should reflect together, in dialogue with their context, often represented by families. Knowledge is co-constructed: fluid, relational, and open.

This brings me to the teacher's democratic role. Teachers must listen in two directions. They must listen to children, their expressions, efforts, contexts, relationships, questions, but also to the curriculum, to societal expectations, to democratic values. Their task is to connect these worlds, not just words, but worlds, linking children's lived experiences with the democratic intentions of education.

In doing so, teachers become essential democratic actors in society. They are rarely recognized as such today, but they should be, just as important as judges or journalists. Teachers are bridges between classroom micro-societies and the broader democratic health of society.

Democracy is not abstract. It is lived. It emerges in small groups, shared projects, and collective discoveries, when children listen, collaborate, experiment, compare, doubt, act, and rethink. This is learning as Dewey described it. A democratic school is a daily practice of common life. We must create classrooms and other semi-formal spaces, libraries, museums, learning centers, where democratic values are lived, negotiated, and reinvented.

And finally: this is not easy. It is not a method. It is a belief, a belief that learning is deeply connected to citizenship, and that schools and teachers carry an essential democratic responsibility. No country can prevent learning from being shaped by diversity and reflection. That is why dictators fear teachers and seek to control them.

Every small step toward democratic practice matters. We do not need only big voices; small actions are just as important. This matters now more than ever. I was born into a Europe shaped by autocrats. Are they returning? Possibly. But we must resist. The local place of resistance is the school. Schools are among our strongest democratic tools, especially when led by playful, creative, researching teachers.

Good luck. Keep going. And thank you, we need your efforts.

The second part of the plenary unfolded as an open space for dialogue, in which the themes addressed in the presentations were taken up again, interwoven, and questioned from different perspectives. At the center of the exchange was a broad reflection on the future of education and on the urgency of remaining anchored to core educational values in a world undergoing profound transformation.

The discussion began with the notion of democratic citizenship, understood not only as formal participation but as real access to opportunities, possibilities for expression, and the recognition of all voices, starting with those of children. Within this framework, the topic of new technologies and artificial intelligence raised questions related to digital citizenship and to educational responsibility in accompanying children, young people, and adults in increasingly complex and interconnected contexts. Strongly emerging was the idea that technological innovation cannot be addressed separately from reflection on humanity, on relationships, and on the very meaning of being human today, in a world marked by environmental, social, and cultural crises.

Several contributions emphasized the importance of listening: listening to children, to their life contexts, and to their experiences and perceptions of technologies that already shape their everyday lives; but also listening to teachers and families, who are often navigating uncertainties and conflicting expectations. Listening was recognized as an essential starting point, especially with younger children, for understanding how technologies affect their lives and for avoiding prescriptive or purely defensive approaches.

Alongside listening, the need for adult responsibility emerged. It was noted that children and young people often develop technological competencies faster than adults, making the idea of simply “teaching” them how to use tools insufficient. The educational role lies in creating safe contexts, caring for boundaries, and promoting ethical and meaningful uses of technology,

including in schools. Artificial intelligence, in particular, was described as a tool to be explored together with students, in order to support individual learning processes, without reducing it to a shortcut or a means of cognitive delegation.

A strong thread running through the discussion was the reaffirmation of core educational values. Technologies continue to change, but what drives education, curiosity, the desire to understand, relationships, and lived experience, remains remarkably constant over time. The centrality of experience-based education, rather than transmissive instruction, was reiterated as a foundation for supporting a democratic and creative society. From this perspective, the greatest risk lies not in technological innovation itself, but in being distracted from the values that should guide its use.

The reflection then expanded to a political and

systemic dimension. The need to conceive education as a right and a common good throughout the entire lifespan emerged clearly, supported by a long-term vision. The concept of "0–99 education" was invoked as a model capable of accompanying people through different stages of life, in a context where cycles of change are increasingly rapid. Within this scenario, the idea of an "educational insurance for life" was proposed as a way to guarantee continuous access to meaningful learning opportunities. International examples illustrated how such visions can be translated into concrete policies, such as flexible educational vouchers that support non-linear learning pathways.

Alongside the political and economic dimension, the importance of pedagogical approach was emphasized. Ensuring access to lifelong education is not sufficient if the educational model does not promote agency, curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. References to the "hundred languages" recalled the idea of educational environments that allow individuals to flourish, explore, and continue learning autonomously into adulthood. In this light, persistent gaps within many education systems were highlighted, particularly in transitions to secondary and higher education, where traditional approaches risk undermining competencies and dispositions that society and the world of work continue to value.

Another central theme was trust: trust in children, in teachers, and in educational communities, as well as trust between different levels of educational and political systems. It was observed that in some contexts there remains institutional trust that enables coherent work aligned with shared educational values, while in others the distance between policies, curricula, and everyday practice requires schools and teachers to take greater responsibility in making visible what actually happens in classrooms. Strengthening the voice of the classroom floor was identified as a crucial step toward making long-term educational change both credible and sustainable.

In the final part of the discussion, attention shifted toward a more relational and ethical dimension, centered on the theme of love in education. Not understood in a sentimental or rhetorical sense, but as a condition that makes learning possible: love as care for relationships, respect, trust, openness to diversity, and wonder toward the world. It was emphasized that educational environments grounded in trust and respect enable children and adults to take risks, ask questions, make mistakes without fear, and engage in the experimentation necessary for learning and creativity. In this sense, also love appeared as deeply

intertwined with creativity and play, since without a safe and welcoming relational context, authentic experimentation cannot take place.

The discussion concluded with a moment of recognition and remembrance, acknowledging the legacy of Carla Rinaldi who has profoundly influenced speakers' educational thinking and practice. A sense of gratitude and responsibility emerged, the desire to continue a collective journey by carrying forward ideas, values, and commitments that do not belong to individuals alone, but live on through relationships, daily practices, and educational communities that choose to nurture and renew them over time.

As the plenary draws to a close, there was a reading of the ending of a tale by Hans Christian Andersen, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, as a tribute to Denmark, the conference-action host country.

In the story, two tailors persuade the Emperor that they have created a magnificent suit, so extraordinary that only intelligent people are able to see it. Afraid of appearing foolish, the Emperor and all those around him choose silence, praising garments that do not exist.

It is a child who breaks that silence when they see the naked emperor parading through the city. The child sees what adults cannot, or will not, see, and by speaking the truth, makes reality visible again.

This image resonates with the themes that have emerged throughout the plenary, and the story leaves an open question, one that remains central to the future of education: do adults and educators possess the competence, the courage, and the humility required to listen to children? To take seriously their questions, their perspectives, and their capacity to reveal what often remains unseen?

Perhaps the future of education begins precisely there, in the willingness to listen, to be challenged, and to see the world anew through children's eyes.

Conference partners presentation

Camilla Uhre Fog

Head of School, International School of Billund

I'm truly honored to welcome you all this evening, on behalf of our friends from Reggio Emilia. And since I'm the Head of School here at this beautiful place, I've been allowed to start the party.

My name is Camilla Uhre Fog, and I'm the Head of School at the International School of Billund. I've been here since before the school opened. ISB is an IB World School, and we're proud to offer both the PYP and the MYP programmes. We welcome children from the age of 3 to 16.

Our shared language at ISB is English, but we are home to more than 70 different nationalities. English is our common language, but whenever you play, learn, or create, you're very welcome to do so in your own language. Multilingualism is a big part of life at a school like this.

We also know how important mother tongue languages are, and how essential it is for students to maintain them. That certainly keeps our teachers busy, but it's work we deeply believe in.

We started in 2013 with just 60 students. At the time, opening an international school in Billund was very much a

“chicken and egg” decision. The school was established through a collaboration between a legal foundation and the Billund municipality, driven by a shared vision: Billund as the Capital of Children.

That vision meant many things, but one of them was the need for an international school that could attract and retain international families and employees in this region of Denmark. Some of you may know Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen and Jørn Vig Knudstorp, they’re very good with numbers. Back then, they predicted we would reach around 150 students within the first twelve years.

Here we are in 2025, with 590 students and 140 staff members. So it’s been a very fast journey, and we’ve enjoyed every hour of it.

Working in education requires a lot of love, and a lot of hours. With 590 students from over 70 nationalities, ISB is often described by parents as a “mini United Nations.” And it really is: a place where cultures meet, perspectives collide, and understandings are constantly being negotiated.

Because of that, when we decided to place play at the heart of everything we do, it naturally led to many conversations. What does play mean, for children? For adults? And how does it actually look in an educational setting? I’ll come back to that in a moment.

Some people ask us: *Are you the LEGO school?*

And the answer is: **nej!**

We are located in LEGO’s hometown. We are a private, independent school with an independent board. We are supported by the LEGO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«The future of learning»
November 20-22, 2025 | International School of Billund
P.E.R.
Play
Explore
Research
Project final event

Foundation, and I do believe we share a certain DNA with LEGO and with this region of Denmark.

Our parents work in many different places. About 41% work in international companies in what we call the Triangle Region, and around 39% are part of the LEGO Group family. So we are not a LEGO school, but we are very much connected to LEGO families.

Our pedagogy is the Pedagogy of Play. It's a pedagogy we developed in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the LEGO Foundation, starting already in 2014, our very first year.

We asked ourselves a simple but difficult question: *What does this actually look like?* What does playful learning look like with children in a classroom?

So we began to research, to explore, and suddenly, we had the indicators of playful learning. The POP process took two years, and Ida Khan O'Neil is our POP research coordinator and has been leading this work ever since.

The indicators, choice, wonder, and delight, are central for us. When they are present, and when you can feel them, we claim that a playful learning experience is taking place.

It can look different, feel different, even smell different, depending on where you are in the school. Playful learning is deeply individual, it's a mindset, a feeling, and that's important to remember when we talk about it beyond our own context.

Our mission is simple: by placing play at the heart of education, ISB stimulates every child's natural desire to learn. Play is how we learn best. We know it. We see it every day. We live it every day.

But when we look closely at play in an educational setting, we also encounter struggle, beautiful struggle, through paradoxes.

In some cultures, play is associated with free time for young children. In play, players lose themselves. In schools, we need timetables. Play can be messy, I need quiet and order. Play involves risk, I've promised parents to keep their children safe. Play lets children take charge, and schools have learning goals.

These paradoxes are ones we revisit again and again. And honestly, we hope we never fully "solve" them. If we ever think we've found the perfect balance, please come and push us. Because we live and breathe in the middle, constantly stretching in different directions.

Today was actually one of those days. The entire school worked on children's rights all day long. To an untrained eye, it may have looked chaotic. To those of us involved, we saw learning, collaboration,

development, and many, many questions being asked.

Paradoxes are essential if you want to work seriously with learning through play.

All ISB staff have weekly time dedicated to pedagogical reflection, because we know that reflection is where growth happens. Forty-five minutes a week. Sometimes doubled every second week.

We work with our pedagogy in different ways. New staff join what we call *POP Culture*. These are teachers new to ISB, returning from leave, or stepping into new roles. Together, they explore questions and contribute to the shared culture.

Then we have *POP Practitioners*, teachers sharing practice. There's very little preparation. You show up, you listen, you ask questions, and you challenge each other.

And then we have *POP Researchers*, staff who choose one research question to explore throughout the year and share their findings. These questions often highlight areas where we know we can grow. When possible, we implement what we learn.

We also have a POP Book Club, which is actually a wonderful pause. When your passion becomes your job, it's easy to forget to stop and reflect. The book club reminds us why we're in education, what we're curious about, and what connects us to our own childhoods.

One of our most important collaborators is our parent community. From the beginning, parents have been essential. We knew what we wanted, but not always how to do it, or how to explain what we ourselves were still figuring out.

We engage parents in many ways: classroom playdates, parent universities, weekly letters, social events, tours, cafés, and workshops. If parents are not on board with learning through play, then we are truly challenged. That's a whole new set of paradoxes. So investing in parents matters deeply to us.

As we've grown, we've also become clearer about who we are, and who we are not. If you're looking for a playful learning environment with challenge, risk-taking, and complexity, that's us.

I think that was the briefest possible introduction to ISB. Later this evening, we'll offer you a tour. The classrooms are empty, so we'll share lots of stories, and then you can decide whether they're true or not.

If you're lucky enough to be here tomorrow, you'll see the students alive and in action. We hope you'll explore with us, and with our wonderful children.

And with that, I'll hand over to Joe from the LEGO Foundation.

Joe Savage

Head of impact at The LEGO Foundation

Thank you, Camilla, and good evening everyone. My name is Joe Savage. I'm the Head of Impact and Evidence at the LEGO Foundation, and I'm also the father of two children here at the International School of Billund, so I can personally confirm that play can be loud, and that children very much take charge.

It's a real pleasure to welcome you to Billund for the final Play Explore Research conference-action. It feels especially fitting to conclude this journey here, in a place that truly celebrates children, their curiosity and creativity, and that champions learning through play.

Over the past few years, the Play Explore Research program has travelled widely, beginning in Reggio Emilia and continuing through Brazil, South Africa, Kenya, the United States, and Vietnam. Along the way, it has engaged educators, researchers, policymakers, communities, families, and children, some of them incredibly young. I think the youngest participant we met was just 35 days old in South Africa.

For me personally, this moment is quite special. I grew up in a Reggio-inspired household in Ireland over four decades ago, and today I have the privilege of welcoming you to the place I now call home. Billund and Reggio Emilia are deeply connected by shared values: a belief in children's potential, in curiosity, creativity, and in learning as a joyful, relational, and playful process. One of the most meaningful aspects of this program has been the opportunity to share that connection with communities around the world, allowing it to evolve and be enriched through dialogue with diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives.

The Play Explore Research program itself was born from a long-standing friendship and collaboration between the LEGO Foundation and Fondazione Reggio Children. For many years, we have been researching, learning, and working together, grounded in a shared conviction: that playful learning is not a luxury. It is not something reserved for children in high-income or stable contexts. Playful learning is essential for all children, everywhere, because it is how children explore the world, how they build relationships, how they express themselves in a hundred languages, and how they reach their full potential.

It's also my pleasure to warmly wel-

come some very special guests joining us. We're honored to have Francesco Profumo, President of Fondazione Reggio Children; Harold Göthson, Senior Advisor and Board Member of the Reggio Emilia Institute in Sweden; Cristian Fabbi, Director of Fondazione Reggio Children; and the wider Foundation team. I'd also like to welcome Professor Mitch Resnick, LEGO Professor of Learning Research at the MIT Media Lab, Ricarose Roque from the University of Colorado Boulder, and of course Camilla Uhre Fog, Head of School here at the International School of Billund.

What has been truly remarkable throughout this conference, and throughout the entire P.E.R. journey, is the quality of exchange. Our speakers and participants are not only deeply committed educators; they are also lifelong learners, eager to listen, to question, and to learn from one another across borders and disciplines.

As we move into the coming days we hope this will be a time full of learning, sharing, play, dancing, and yes, even cake. We believe this is a meaningful moment, and we are deeply grateful to all of you here in person, as well as to those joining us online from around the world, for your commitment, your curiosity, your energy, and your dedication to supporting children to reach their full potential.

So once again, welcome to Billund, and thank you for being part of this journey.

Cristian Fabbi

CEO of Fondazione Reggio Children

Thank you, Joe, and thank you all for being here. It truly means a lot to us.

First of all, let me thank the International School of Billund for hosting us, for the friendship, the support, and the generosity. And of course, thank you to the LEGO Foundation for being our partner, as Joe mentioned, for so many years. I also want to acknowledge the friendship between Carla Rinaldi and the entire LEGO ecosystem, which has been so important and meaningful for us.

Just a very brief introduction to Fondazione Reggio Children, because over these three days we will have plenty of time to get to know one another better and to work together. And in the end, that is always the best way to truly get to know each other.

Our Foundation was established in 2011 with the aim of working to ensure that all children have access to a quality education, regardless of where they live, which country they are in, or the conditions they experience. This is our core mission, and it is clearly stated in the Fondazione Reggio Children's Charter for Quality Education.

Our work is not limited to early childhood. Carla Rinaldi often spoke about education from 0 to 99, and that is very much how we understand our responsibility and our work. I would also like to quote Carla when she said that we must work to develop solidarity through research. This is something we try to practice every day, working in research with colleagues around the world, many of whom are here today. There are also many friends in this room, which makes this moment even more meaningful and allows us to continue this journey of solidarity through research together.

We also have a doctoral PhD program, and some of our colleagues are here as part of that path, supported as well through the collaboration with the LEGO Foundation. This allows us to think about research in a different way compared to more traditional or academic models, by having our PhD colleagues actively involved with us in all of our projects.

We also have the special participation of Pause – the Atelier of Taste, that for the first time is involved in a P.E.R. conference-action besides the one in Reggio Emilia. PAUSE is both a service provider and a permanent research laboratory for

Fondazione Reggio Children, located at the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre, in Reggio Emilia. It is a living space, where research on taste unfolds every day through experience and exploration. Through its activities, Pause becomes a constant and privileged observatory on food culture and wellbeing.

Our foundation works in many countries, including contexts that are fragile or complex, where we strongly believe that children have the same right to a quality education. At the same time, we also work in several areas in Italy where this right is still not fully recognized, and we believe there is an urgent need to act there as well.

It is essential to work on building awareness and strengthening the capacities of educators, caregivers, parents, and teachers. Through the P.E.R. project, we have been trying to find new ways to develop these capacities: not through lectures or traditional conferences, but by working together. This has led us to create situations where many workshops happen simultaneously, with people doing things together, sharing ideas and experiences that immediately become part of their practice with children, even the very next day.

This approach deeply resonates with what our founder, Loris Malaguzzi, meant when he spoke of pensare con le mani, “thinking with the hands.” It is through doing things together that we learn and develop real educational capacity.

So once again, thank you very much for being here with us. We are opening these three days of conference-action which are dedicated to Carla Rinaldi. And we truly hope that, at the end of this shared journey, we will be able to work together even more closely and to share practices more deeply, because that is the true meaning of being here together.

Helle-Marie Skopje
Kolding School of Design

My name is Helle-Marie Skovbjerg, and I'm a Professor at the Design School in Kolding, where I'm responsible for research in Play design. We are all gathered here today because we celebrate play in many different ways, and that is something that means a great deal to both me and the research group I lead.

A few years ago, we decided to be very intentional about communicating this commitment. We created the Play Design Manifesto as a way of insisting on the value of play, and on the need to continue caring for it. One of its core principles is that play is not just a gimmick. Play is a profession, and it is essential that we continue to insist on that.

When we visited Reggio Emilia in September, it became very clear how much we share a deep care for materials. In our research, we refer to this as *material play* or *material-driven play design research*. We insist on caring for materials as a way of interacting with the world, of shaping and creating the world, and of ensuring that we have the right materials at hand.

Materials, of course, are also created through the work of our wonderful design research colleagues. You can see some examples here, projects that explore materials from many different perspectives, always insisting on aesthetics, attention, and care.

Participation is another core value in much of our work. When we conduct play research, we insist on inviting collaborators into the process. This includes children, pedagogues, research fellows, and many others. What matters to us is not just involvement, but real interaction and genuine participation.

Alongside the research we do in our lab, we also host the only Master's program in the world dedicated entirely to play design. Some of my students are here today, which makes me very happy. In the program, students are invited to explore many different aspects of play. They gain insights into the fundamentals of play, collaborate with partners in the world around us, and explore the value play can create in a wide range of contexts.

I also think it's important to mention, especially here at an international school, that the program welcomes students from all over the world. For me, as a Danish researcher who grew up in Denmark,

it is a real privilege to be challenged by different perspectives and worldviews. It keeps me on my toes, especially when designing for play.

Our graduates go on to work in many different fields and contexts, and this is something we value deeply, because play, we believe, needs to be everywhere. If you're interested in our research or in our collaboration with Fondazione Reggio Children, please feel free to reach out. I would be very happy to tell you more.

I'm really looking forward to this day, and thank you all very much for listening.

Stacia Jackson

Senior Learning Designer at LEGO Education

Imagine a classroom where every child engages in collaborative science experiences through Learning Through Play and Universal Design for Learning. Discover how LEGO® Education Science can transform teaching with hands-on, standards-aligned lessons that provide actionable strategies for inclusive learning.

Why Inclusion Matters: Inclusion in education is essential for addressing diverse learning needs. Every student should have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of ability. We emphasize inclusion for students with various challenges, including autism, visual impairments, and learning disabilities.

LEGO Education Science: Our latest product offers a hands-on approach to learning for ages 5+, 8+, and 11+. It sparks 'aha moments' through joyful engagement, backed by over 40 years of educational expertise. LEGO Education designs experiences that empower educators and excite students.

Supporting Inclusive Learning: Awarded the CAST UDL Product Certification, LEGO Education Science prioritizes inclusion. It uses visual supports, multi-modal instruction, and progress tracking to help every student thrive. Its adaptive structure accommodates various learning needs, fostering a strong science-learner identity.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Integrating UDL principles into science curricula enhances student success. By combining UDL with Learning Through Play, we empower teachers to create dynamic, inclusive classrooms. These strategies meet diverse needs and inspire curiosity.

Whitepaper and Further Resources: Our upcoming whitepaper, "Building Inclusive Science Classrooms," synthesizes LEGO Education's design process, UDL guidelines, and academic research. Available Q1 2026, it provides insights into fostering inclusive environments and the benefits of combining design with play.

Cecilé Stadler and Jaleesa Trapp
Lifelong Kindergarten at MIT Media Lab

Good morning, everyone. My name is Cecilé Stadler, and I'm joined by my colleague here, Jaleesa Trapp. Today, I'll be giving a brief introduction to our workshop.

We're from the MIT Media Lab, specifically the Lifelong Kindergarten group, led by our advisor, Mitchell Resnick.

At Lifelong Kindergarten, our research focuses on how to engage young people from diverse communities in creative learning experiences, amplifying their voices and supporting them in telling stories that matter to them, through the thoughtful integration of technology.

In the workshop Creative Storytelling with OctoStudio, there is the chance to play with OctoStudio, a creative coding app that allows you to create anytime, anywhere. Using block-based programming, it helps you bring the world into your phone or tablet, and also put your phone or tablet back into the world in new and creative ways.

This will be a very hands-on, playful, and creative workshop, and we're really looking forward to exploring and experimenting together. I'll share a bit more about creative learning, the work of Lifelong Kindergarten, and what we'll be doing during the session once we get started.

I don't have any warm-up activities to follow Stacia right now, but I warmly invite you to jump in, play with us, and explore together.

Thank you so much, and we're excited to have you with us.

Kåre Rønge

Danish Reggio Emilia Network

As the Danish Reggio Emilia Network we haven't been directly involved in the project you are concluding here today, but we are very happy to have been invited to join you for this final meeting. It really means a lot to us.

So, what is it all about Reggio Emilia, for us? Everyone we have brought to Reggio Emilia over the years has been deeply fascinated by the work. That fascination actually began back in the early 1980s. In 1983, we organized our very first study tour to Reggio Emilia, and since then, we have continuously brought people there. So this is more than forty years of ongoing work.

This brings me to the purpose of our association, the Danish Reggio Emilia Network. Our goal is to develop childhood culture in Denmark, inspired by the pedagogical experience of Reggio Emilia.

It has been a long journey together with our colleagues in Reggio. One major milestone, besides the early study tours, was the exhibition *The Hundred Languages of Children* in 1986. We hosted it in three major Danish cities, and more than 30,000 people visited. That exhibition became a real catalyst for many years of experimentation and development in Danish preschools and public schools. And we are still doing our best to continue this work today.

These are some of the activities we carry out in the Danish network. We organize courses for teachers and for anyone interested in early childhood education. We also host lectures, often with guests from Reggio Emilia. Over the years, hundreds of educators from Reggio Emilia have come to Denmark to give lectures, and they are always a great success.

Study tours remain a core activity. As I mentioned, the first one was in 1983, and just a month ago we held our most recent tour. In fact, this year marked our 40th anniversary, which felt very special. There is still strong interest, both in the work being done in Reggio Emilia and in what is happening here in Denmark.

Many of the projects we carry out in kindergartens and public schools involve collecting documentation and materials. Some of this becomes part of research projects or publications. Publishing is also an important part of our work: we publish books from Reggio Emilia, as well as books and materials developed within our own network.

We also produce our own magazine, *Reflektioner,* which is quite popular. It is published twice a year. We are currently working on the next issue, which will be released next month. The magazine allows our members to write and share their experiences, giving voice to both teachers' perspectives and children's perspectives. It's a strong way of communicating everyday practice in Danish institutions.

Of course, the journey has not been without challenges. In 2006, new legislation introduced a model of public management that affected all schools in Denmark. Many institutions were grouped into large clusters, and this significantly limited their freedom to work with Reggio-inspired pedagogy. That was a difficult period. But things are improving. After the pandemic, new approaches were tested, and today schools once again have more autonomy. Teachers can make their own choices, follow their interests, and explore Reggio Emilia, or other approaches, in meaningful ways.

One very important development has been the creative recycling centers. We now have five of them in Denmark, and they have been a huge success. In fact, they involve more than 400 institutions, many more than are formally part of the network itself. These centers have acted as a kind of cultural catalyst, especially through work with materials and project-based learning.

In many ways, this is a very concrete and practical way of introducing Reggio Emilia thinking. It's playful, hands-on, and less theoretical, which makes it very accessible for both teachers and children. We've seen many powerful projects emerge from this work. In one example, a young girl found some pieces of paper at a recycling center and noticed letters printed on them. That simple discovery led her to search for letters in her environment, including trying to read a friend's name written under a stool. This small moment grew into a larger project about writing, language, and communication.

We also offer many courses for teachers through creative recycling centers. One program brings educators from all over Denmark together to explore ideas, develop projects, and then take them back to their institutions. Later, we meet again to reflect on what happened with the children.

The centers are now also moving directly into schools. Many institutions have their own small centers, where materials are readily available. The work has even expanded into hospitals, involving nurses and doctors as well. It's an ongoing process, and it continues to open up new and interesting possibilities.

So, this is a brief picture of our work. We are very grateful to be able to share this day with you. Thank you very much.

From Reggio to Billund:
P.E.R. project around the world

A plenary by Fondazione Reggio Children

Giulia Ferrari
P.E.R. Project Officer, Fondazione Reggio Children

The final event in Billund became a meaningful moment for Fondazione Reggio Children to share, with a wide and international audience, the journey of the past two and a half years of this international research project dedicated to playful approach to learning.

More than a presentation, it was an opportunity to make visible both what has been and what continues to unfold, a collective story shaped by the many people who have taken part in the project and contributed to building a true global platform for exchange. The P.E.R team led the presentation through data, photographs, videos, and documentation. The plenary held together memory and vision, reflecting on what has emerged, what has been learned, and the new questions and possibilities now opening ahead.

Starting with *Convening Educators,* the area dedicated to the seven conference-actions held around the world, in Italy, Brazil, South Africa, Colorado (USA), Kenya, Vietnam and Denmark the presentation moved through the *Research* area, made possible thanks to a strong synergy with the PhD program in Reggio Childhood Studies and

the wider community of students and researchers. It then arrived at the *Shared Projec*t part which saw the creation of the Caffarri Research Centre, opened in 2024 in Reggio Emilia, and the development of its activities. All of this was accompanied by the cross-cutting areas of communication, evaluation, and monitoring. The presentation also offered an in-depth overview of the experiences and workshops developed and shared across different contexts.

At its heart, the project promotes a playful approach to learning, along with the rights to quality education and play, to social justice and sustainable development. Along the way, it has brought together educators, researchers, policymakers, institutions, and local communities across diverse cultural and geographical contexts.

A project grounded in encounters, dialogue, and shared responsibility, P.E.R. has grown through many voices, perspectives, and experiences, expanding into a living network of exchange. Through these connections, it continues to nurture new educational communities and to strengthen a culture of playful learning as an inclusive research-based educational approach.

Convening educators

This area of the project aimed to organize seven *conference-actions* around the world. P.E.R. was conceived as a platform connecting educational communities globally. Rather than traditional conferences, it offered *conference-actions*: interactive spaces where peer-to-peer exchange became a powerful tool for personal and professional growth.

Since its launch, in Reggio Emilia in 2023, P.E.R. has traveled worldwide. In 2024, it landed to São Paulo, Brazil, and Johannesburg, South Africa; in 2025, it continued its journey to Denver, USA; Nairobi, Kenya; Hanoi, Vietnam; and finally Billund, Denmark, home of The LEGO

Foundation. Each location brought its own context and energy, making every event a unique conversation within the global educational community.

Each *conference-action* combined workshops and hands-on experiences to foster a circular flow of knowledge: participants learn not only from speakers but also from each other, sharing responsibility and expertise. This interactive format empowers educators to bring new and unexpected ideas back to their own communities.

A defining feature of P.E.R. was its co-designed format: every event was unique, shaped in collaboration with local partners. While the central theme was playful learning, each *conference-action* also focused on a specific topic informed by the interests and expertise of its partners. Across the series, themes have included community educational practices, early childhood policies and caregiving, natural and digital dialogue, empowering communities to shape resilient pillars for quality education, and wellbeing.

Research

One of the project's key contributions has been its impact on academic and scientific knowledge around learning through play. The second strand of the project, *Research*, was designed to advance understanding in this field through an ongoing dialogue between theory and practice. This work was made possible through the PhD course in Reggio Childhood Studies – From Early Childhood to Lifelong Learning, jointly promoted by Fondazione Reggio Children and the Department of Education and Humanities at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Italy).

This highly interdisciplinary doctoral program, rooted in the experience and educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia, opens to multiple fields of knowledge and inquiry. A vibrant community of PhD fellows and researchers engaged with the project in diverse ways, not only through research and academic writing, but also through participation in events and conferences, as well as in the organization of conference-actions and research activities hosted at the research center.

Shared project

A third major area of the project was the creation and development of the Caffarri Research Centre, in Reggio Emilia, a space designed to research and experiment playful approaches to learning and to highlight the recursive relationship between practice and theory. The Centre was open to the neighbourhood, the wider community, and an international network, serving as a space of ongoing dialogue with educators,

families, academics, policymakers, children, and institutions.

It provided professional development opportunities and learning experiences for children, adolescents, teachers, educators, and parents, within an environment intentionally designed to encourage reciprocity and exchange across multiple languages and disciplines. PhD students also had a dedicated space to conduct their research in close connection with the Centre's activities. After an initial period of setup, the Centre began its daily activities in 2024, marking the start of its regular programme of research and community engagement.

Watch the set-up video of the Caffarri centre

Meaning-making between the Natural and the Digital

Elena Sofia Paoli
Atelierista, Fondazione Reggio Children

With this brief presentation, we would like to share a part of our research that investigates the relationship between the natural and the digital. Our work takes us into the realm of experiences connected to images, beauty, aesthetic perception, and the *hundred languages* through which we interpret and give shape to the world around us.

Within this framework, we also explore the concept of learning to play, seeing it as a dynamic process of engagement that transcends the traditional boundaries between the natural and the digital, inviting individuals to explore, experiment, and create within both realms simultaneously.

From this field of research, and from the experiences we engage in with children, three different workshop proposals have emerged. Over the past three years, these workshops have traveled across Reggio Emilia, São Paulo, Denver, Hanoi, and today, here in Billund.

Design Your Jungle – New Scenarios Between Coding and the Garden

Open-mouthed – Hybrid Learning Spaces: Inside and Outside the Classroom

We Could Ask the Tree... – Children Encounter Signs and Codes

Everything starts from a fundamental human need: to relate to the world and to understand it. In this learning process, the role of images emerges as central in the creation of new imaginaries.

We aim to present both the meanings that emerge through this process and the ways in which the learning experiences unfold, the *what* and the *how*.

> Everything has meaning, and who knows what the plants are trying to tell us...
> Mariam, librarian

This sentence by Mariam reminds us that everything begins with the human need to relate in order to live. Such relationships allow us to understand and construct the world through the attribution of meaning.

The need to make sense, even of the most mysterious and unknown worlds, such as the plant world, leads us both to listen to things and to express ourselves through them.

This way of knowing starts from experience, from engaging the body to approach learning actively. How is this achieved? Through aesthetic experience, which does not only mean beauty, but rather sensitiv-

ity, experiencing through the senses. The contexts we choose and prepare must be environments that "raise the antennae," sparking physical curiosity.

Gradually, from the broad and rich context, we select and move closer to something with which we wish to engage. For example, we establish an aesthetic and empathetic relationship with a small branch. Sometimes we use our bare body, and sometimes we use tools. In this way, we encounter a subject, not an object.

In this aesthetic dimension, which activates learning, questions naturally emerge, arising from first perceptions, initial signs, and traces to interpret.

> How does a plant communicate?
> Does the plant know it is communicating something through its green color?
> Who knows what it feels like to live above and below the ground at the same time...

Interpretation takes place in groups through sharing and exchange of skills, the circulation of knowledge, leading to initial hypotheses about the subject under investigation, hypotheses that require further exploration through diverse methods and research strategies.

The research approach highlighted in this presentation focuses specifically on images and representation. Drawing is one of the most widely used human practices, both to analyze and to stimulate new ideas, from the caves to the present day. Images support thinking, beginning with a drawing that resembles and represents the characteristics of a subject, gradually turning it into an icon.

> These are the signs, the little paths this forest has made... or maybe the tree made them as it was growing older. Kim

In the initial phase of an inquiry through drawing, the focus is on verisimilitude, a correspondence between the real subject and its representation. The different media chosen lead to different ideas and lines of reasoning: frottage differs from a pencil portrait, yet both remain forms of "copying."

Another way in which we construct our mental images is by considering signs as clues, indices of something else. These clues maintain a connection, a relationship with some aspect of the subject, such as a shadow, a trace, or an imprint. They share something in common.

> A trail of snail slime on a dry tree trunk...
> Why did it move from there? Why did it leave this little path?

Through the research process, con-

nections begin to emerge, both formal and meaningful, among the different images that are photographed or collected through drawing.

> There is a research about patterns of different subjects.
> ... the leaves fall down in a pattern, in a structure, that reminded me of tiles.
> ... a structure that repeats itself, repeats itself, repeats itself.

In this young person's words, images allow us to formulate a theory related to recurring structures, present both in living beings and in human-made artifacts. This becomes an initial pathway to explore further the theme of patterns and their function.

Within the human capacity to abstract, by creating symbols and inventing, the *atelier* comes into play, together with the possibility of using multiple expressive languages connected to different fields of knowledge. Not only verbal language, not only drawing, but the many possibilities that allow us to interpret and reinterpret the world. Different languages for different domains of knowledge: light and color; form and the relationships between forms in geometry; collage and composition as acts of assembling and connecting. This also includes graphic design, digital animation, sound, and sonic qualities.

Through expressive languages, we are able to investigate and transform reality, not merely represent it as realistically as possible. Taking a step toward abstraction means transforming reality by giving it a new, more synthetic and symbolic form. It means not drawing what is there, but drawing what we perceive, what comes to mind. Ideas. The transformation of reality into symbols.

This is similar to what happens with words in natural languages. For example:

> "Take the word 'man'. These four letters bear no resemblance to a man, nor does the sound associated with them. Nor is the word existentially connected to any particular man, as an index would be (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916)

A symbol does not carry meaning in itself; it is human beings who decide that a symbol stands for something. Meaning is established through agreement among people. It is arbitrary, because it could have been otherwise. It is a cultural negotiation.

A further step consists in combining symbols into systems of codes, creating symbolic languages by coding reality. These codes are then used to represent information, and they too are the result of shared agreements among those who cre-

ate and use them. One example: a group of adults imagines a numerical code to document the growth of flowers and leaves on a linden tree, connecting the type of tree with its formal development.

> (Observing some linden tree leaves) This tree told me that its favorite number is 7, because it has 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. So it makes 7 by 7 by 7 by 7 all the time, these strands coming out from the center. And the same happened with the other one.
> ...this tree's favorite number was 3, because it did everything the same way with 3 by 3 by 3 by 3. So different trees have different favorite numbers. Jim
> ... there was some kind of code here, with numbers. Tobias

As we move toward the conclusion of this reflection, we return to our investigation of the relationship between the natural and the digital. In educational practice, it is essential to create experiences that allow movement between the real and the symbolic, the concrete and the abstract, supporting the construction of imaginaries around complex concepts, through images, symbols, and eventually codes, while respecting the gradual nature of the learning process.

When introducing a digital tool or environment, it is important to move beyond a purely functional approach. While the functional use of a tool may be learned, the higher aim should be to support and nurture human creative capacity. The digital should enable experiences in which the complexity of the world can be "touched" and reinterpreted through expressive languages.

Storytelling with waste materials to inhabit a common world

Eloisa Di Rocco
Atelierista, Fondazione Reggio Children

This contribution emerges from my work within the Remida project, a research context that recognizes discarded industrial materials as educational resources. The reflections presented here explore how storytelling with waste materials can become a way of inhabiting a common world.

I would like to begin with a question posed by Carla Rinaldi: *"What do you see in the future of education?"*

Waste plays a significant role in the global environmental crisis that will inevitably shape the future of our lives, and especially the lives of children, who are among the most vulnerable populations. Alongside fundamental rights such as the right to play, to education, and to participation, the United Nations also recognizes children's right to live in a healthy society.

While we seek technological solutions to mitigate environmental collapse, we must also come to terms with the world we already share with waste – a damaged yet common world.

In this context, storytelling can be understood as a form of serious play: a collective search for meaning and solutions, and an exploration of possibilities. Stories are everywhere. Even what appears voiceless can tell a story. Objects and materials hold narratives that can be listened to and woven together with our own.

For this reason, we proposed to play, explore, and research around materials without voice, waste and discarded matter that coexist with children and adults. We asked how listening and storytelling might generate forms of friendship with the smallest, most hidden, and neglected subjects, a playful and attentive friendship.

The reflections shared here arise from encounters between people and waste materials within projects developed in Johannesburg (South Africa), Brazil, and Italy.

In this research, waste materials were considered non-human participants. Collected from different places around the world, they entered into dialogue with those who encountered them.

At the beginning of this encounter, both materials and people require time: time to look, to touch, to listen. Sight, touch, hearing, and smell converge. We invited participants to remain in the suspended moment that precedes making – in the space of not yet knowing. Children, in particular, demonstrate a remarkable ability to inhabit this space and to listen to the multiple, invisible identities of things.

A nameless and functionless piece of waste became a rainbow. An orange rubber fragment transformed into a wheel or a wedding ring. Adults, too, revealed a playful capacity to engage with these apparently passive materials. One teacher observed that a fragment reminded her of her childhood games. Under a microscope, it resembled the skin of a hand or even a fashion accessory.

Another participant adopted a more scientific approach, using a stethoscope to "listen" to the material. She remarked that one can hear the sounds of life even within so-called dead matter. In her listening, she imagined a fruit containing a seed – as if it had preserved its story while others had disappeared.

Storytelling unfolds through many languages, not only verbal ones. Drawing, composition, gesture, and movement all become narrative forms.

A silent child, for instance, drove a small blue Lego piece for a long time, gradually constructing a story in which it became a

car carrying him and a friend to the zoo. Metal rings inspired a fairy tale in which they successively transformed into a rainbow, a caterpillar, and an accordion.

Many materials evoke memories and affections. One participant associated a fragment with crochet lace and with her grandmother's skin. As a child, she had learned complex stitches from her; years later, she resumed crocheting with her grandson. The same material, encountered in different contexts, generated different meanings, in Soweto, for example, it became a pizza.

Stories, in this sense, can mend broken or painful bonds, not only with the planet, but also with our own histories.

In a project developed at Ububele in South Africa, we invited expectant mothers to use waste materials to compose a story of welcome for their unborn children. Through sewing, selecting, and manipulating colorful fabrics and fragments, the women began recalling memories of childhood, family narratives, pregnancies, and losses.

Each mother created a unique message. In one composition, a glittering net – itself a discarded material – symbolized the enduring presence of a beloved mother who had passed away. In another, nature was represented as a source of beauty and learning, with the expressed wish that future generations would not only preserve it but also receive its teachings.

At the end of the experience, one mother reflected that storytelling is not merely about telling stories; it is about learning about the world. Another observed that we can learn from materials just as we learn from children.

The first right of a child is to have a name. What has a name exists; what exists can be cared for.

Listening to materials and to the stories they suggest may remind us of our responsibility toward them. By caring for things, we also care for the environment and for ourselves within the common world we inhabit – however fragile or damaged it may be.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why learning remains worthwhile.


hannesburg, South Africa | October 2024

The experience of movement: the body as language

Riccardo Ronzoni
Atelierista, Fondazione Reggio Children

The P.E.R. project offered us the opportunity to travel across different countries and encounter diverse communities through a shared language: the language of the body. Movement became the medium through which we related to one another, explored unfamiliar contexts, and constructed forms of mutual understanding beyond words.

Skin, the senses, nature, emotion, imagination, joy, and community emerged as key themes guiding this research. These dimensions were explored together with adults and children in workshops developed in different cultural settings, revealing movement as a powerful tool for connection and meaning-making.

Skin: touch as relationship

How can we connect through the sense of touch?

The skin is both boundary and bridge. It contains us and, at the same time, places us in direct relationship with the world. As the largest organ of the human body, it can be understood as a frontier between self and environment. In early childhood, the skin is a primary site of knowledge. Through touch, infants receive information about pressure, temperature, softness, and texture. The intensity and intention of a touch or embrace communicate precise and meaningful signals. From birth, children have a vital need to be held, embraced, and rocked in order to develop a sense of self, bodily boundaries, and possibilities for movement. Similarly, to know the world, children must touch it. Through their hands, early cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and psychological development takes shape.

To touch always also means to be touched.

In a workshop held in Johannesburg with young mothers and their babies, we focused on the bodily dialogue between mother and child. This relationship is built reciprocally, through daily discoveries and a non-verbal communicative system grounded in gesture, gaze, and proximity.

How can we understand what a baby is telling us? A baby does not speak through words; she communicates through her body. One mother observed, “She gives me a look, and I can feel what she feels.” Another reflected, “Hugging him is playing.” In this perspective, even daily routines can become spaces of play and shared exploration.

Carla Rinaldi reminds us that “you cannot touch without being touched,” empha-

sizing the importance of embracing the world through the senses in order to develop a holistic understanding of reality. We are always in contact with our environment through our skin and senses. Nature, too, touches us – through wind, light, textures, and temperature – offering what might be called a "natural touch." In natural forms and patterns, we often recognize resonances with our own bodies, similarities between human and non-human landscapes.

Nature: from inner landscape to outer world

How can we reconnect with nature? One possible path lies in nurturing our relationship with our own bodies – listening to sensations, attending to what the body communicates.

How can we "travel" from our inner nature to the nature that surrounds us? Can movement help us re-establish a harmonious relationship with the environment?

Dance reconnects us with the most instinctive and less rational dimensions of ourselves. Participants frequently described how movement enabled them to feel grounded, vulnerable, open, and connected. One person reflected that movement itself creates connection with nature: one does not need to be physically immersed in a forest to experience resonance with the natural world; it is movement that connects the body to it.

Through dance, sensations take shape. Moving to the rhythm of one's emotions can generate a shift

of state: a sense of lightness, trust, and shared presence. In a safe environment characterized by attentive listening, participants described feeling each other's emotions and experiencing a transformation made possible through collective movement.

Imagination: resonance and transformation

Imagination plays a fundamental role in expanding bodily possibilities. As Loris Malaguzzi suggested in his reflections on resonance, we may ask how human beings can resonate with a tree or exchange energy with other forms of life. Drawing on imagery close to Zen thought, Malaguzzi proposed that the form of the wind becomes visible through the trees: the movement of branches gives shape to what is otherwise invisible. The tree, with its deep roots and flexible trunk, becomes both emblem and model – a metaphor of strength and adaptability that can pass into us and into children.

Imagination allows dancers to explore new ways of moving. Without imagination, dance cannot exist – as choreographer Dominique Du-

puy has affirmed. When participants envisioned themselves as trees, they described discovering unexpected forms of movement. Imagining storms or adverse weather conditions led to further transformation: the body adapted, resisted, yielded, and reinvented itself.

Imagination moves us. It opens possibilities and invites the body to transcend habitual patterns.

Community: movement beyond words

Throughout these experiences, a form of "movement community" gradually emerged. Dance created connections that transcended linguistic, cultural, social, and generational differences. Movement functioned as a mode of communication capable of reaching beyond verbal language.

Participants frequently described a shift from initial estrangement to shared belonging: from being strangers to feeling connected through the simple act of dancing together. For some, this meant overcoming shyness or self-consciousness; for others, it meant discovering a collective rhythm in which each individual could find a place.

In this sense, movement fosters community not by erasing differences, but by allowing them to coexist within a shared bodily experience.

Joy: movement as celebration and transformation

When children move in an environment where they feel free to express themselves, joy becomes visible – in their gestures, in their faces, in the quality of their presence. Body language creates bonds that are often described as profound and immediate.

Dance accompanies human life in multiple contexts: at birthdays, weddings, in the street, at home, on stage, behind curtains. It communicates joy and pain; it serves as ritual, manifestation of vitality, and transformation. As choreographer Sasha Waltz suggests, dance allows us to feel our own body, to go beyond it, and to encounter another body.

Within the P.E.R. project, movement revealed itself as an educational language – one that supports connection, imagination, and collective presence. The body, understood as language, enables us to inhabit relationships more fully and to experience learning as a lived, shared process.

Building the pillars of a quality education policy

Cristian Fabbi
CEO of Fondazione Reggio Children

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to all participants of the Atelier of Policies for their engagement. their engagement. The atelier presented here is the result of collective work and was developed in collaboration with Riccardo Ronzoni, whose contribution has been fundamental.

Before joining the Foundation, my professional background was rooted in policy and policy development. Within the P.E.R. project, I had the opportunity to revisit this field through an atelier format that was implemented in each country involved in the project. Significantly, in every context the atelier evolved differently. This variability is not incidental; rather, it conveys one of the central messages of the work: there is no universal or "perfect" educational policy applicable to all contexts. Policies are shaped by values, anthropology, collective psychology, and historical trajectories. Even within a single country, multiple policy configurations may coexist.

The atelier focuses on key components of educational policy, including curriculum, pre-service and in-service teacher training, assessment, financing frameworks, quality criteria, inclusion policies, and definitions of services. Participants are invited to select one of these components and, working in small groups, imagine themselves as a team commissioned by a national government to design a policy in that area.

The distinctive element of this atelier lies in the use of recycled and open-ended materials. Inspired by the pedagogical experience of Remida, these materials function not merely as tools for representation, but as mediators of thought. They act as conceptual catalysts, enabling participants to reflect on complex political themes through symbolic construction.

Two primary working strategies consistently emerged across contexts. In some groups, participants began by engaging directly with the materials, allowing the objects themselves to suggest ideas and metaphors. In others, participants initiated a brainstorming process, identifying key principles and values before selecting materials that corresponded to their conceptual framework. Both approaches proved equally generative, demonstrating that material engagement and abstract reflection can function as complementary pathways in policy design.

The preparation of the space also plays a crucial role. The way materials are offered – organized by color, shape, or substance – constitutes a cultural and

aesthetic proposal. It invites engagement and signals that policy-making can be approached as a creative, relational, and reflective process rather than solely as a technical exercise.

Once each group has constructed its policy model, the second phase of the atelier involves placing all the policies on a shared table and exploring their interconnections. For example, quality criteria may intersect with inclusion policies; financing frameworks may influence curriculum implementation; teacher education may shape assessment practices. In one workshop, participants connected seven different policy components, occupying the entire space of the room to visualize the systemic nature of educational governance.

This phase emphasizes that educational policy is not a collection of isolated measures but a dynamic ecosystem. The relational dimension of policy becomes visible through physical proximity, symbolic bridges, and shared materials.

Participants are also invited to consider essential criteria for policy development. A policy should be clear, contemporary, and future-oriented. Given that educational policies often remain in place for decades, they must anticipate long-term social and cultural transformations. They must also be efficient and sustainable. However, perhaps the most significant requirement is philosophical coherence. Policy should not be reduced to a legal instrument for regulating services; it must be grounded in an explicit vision of education and society.

A crucial reflection that emerged across several ateliers concerns the relationship between policy and context. Any policy must respect the values, cultural practices, and anthropological dimensions of the community in which it operates. This awareness led to complex discussions around colonization and decolonization.

In one case, participants reflected on a project developed in Mozambique aimed at enabling children with special rights to access early childhood education. In collaboration with local leaders in the province of Xai-Xai, efforts were made to create opportunities for children who had previously remained at home to attend a form of preschool service. While the initiative was intended to promote inclusion, the group raised an important and challenging question: could this intervention itself be considered a form of colonizing practice? If local cultural norms did not traditionally include preschool attendance, was introducing such a model imposing an external framework?

This reflection opened a broader philosophical dialogue on colonization and decolonization. Drawing on the thought of

Achille Mbembe, participants considered the need for caution in decolonizing processes: in seeking to dismantle imposed structures, one must avoid erasing valuable developments or producing further harm. The conversation highlighted the complexity of policy-making in intercultural contexts and underscored the ethical responsibility embedded in educational reform.

The Atelier on Policy proposes an alternative way of approaching educational governance. Through collective construction, symbolic materials, and dialogical reflection, policy becomes a shared, imaginative, and critical endeavor. It invites participants to move beyond technical compliance and to engage with the philosophical, cultural, and ethical foundations of educational systems.

Ultimately, the atelier suggests that policy-making, like education itself, is a relational act – one that requires attentiveness to context, openness to plurality, and a sustained commitment to values.

Playing with the more-than-human: rethinking play in the Anthropocene

Lisa Goddard
PhD student in Reggio Childhood Studies, P.E.R. scholarship

Participating in the Play Explore Research project as a student of the PhD program has been a very valuable experience and has strongly—and positively—shaped my research experience. I have felt present inside the projects of the Fondazione, more so perhaps than at the University, which is a unique aspect of participating in an industrial PhD. Each collaboration with Fondazione colleagues has led to more and more involvement, and now that I am in my final year of my doctoral work, I am reflecting on what it means to be a PhD student inside a project like P.E.R.

Over the last couple years, I have been involved in a few projects at Fondazione Reggio Children: *Palestra delle Domande (Questions Playground)*, alongside Barbara Donnici, which aims at exploring the role of open-ended questions in supporting creative learning processes; *Natura Digitale*, with atelieristas Elena Sofia and Riccardo, a professional development opportunity for public primary school teachers and their students to enhance the ways they bring STEM learning to life through creative and digital tools, with a particular focus on taking the perspective of another living creature the children come into contact with at their school; and the international conference-actions of *P.E.R.* in Denver, Colorado (USA) in April 2025, and here in Billund (Denmark). This was an opportunity for me to see the iterative process of co-constructing playful learning events across contexts, and to work side by side with various partners to create meaningful experiences that respond to the cultural, social, and political realities of each context. And through supporting other workshops in addition to facilitating my own, such as documenting participants' creative works in "We could ask the tree" or preparing materials from Remida for "Building the pillars of a quality education policy," I was able to see up close how personal, embodied, social, and often surprising the learning is that arises through play. The questions and knowledge that emerged through collective play, as well as the depth of personal reflections that participants shared, provided concrete insights into how play supports learning processes—for adults as well as children—that are embodied and socially situated, and informed my understanding of how such processes can be taken seriously in research.

In this brief account I cannot tell you all of the wonderful things that have emerged

through these various projects; but what is at the heart of all of them, is the way that FRC's approach to research has impacted my experience.

My research focuses on play and ways we might come to understand the concept of play differently for children and their educators in the context of the Anthropocene and the ecological crisis. As an educator myself, I have always felt myself more of a playmate to children, and a creative facilitator alongside children, rather than a traditional teacher who passes down information. I have always told the children in my care that I don't know all the answers, but that what I do know how to do is accompany them through their explorations and play.

When I became a doctoral student, confronted with the task of "conducting research," I felt the pressure of the Academy—whether it was real or imagined—to be serious and sure and professional, and to always know what I'm talking about. I had the idea that "research" was a serious thing to do. I felt a tension between play and research, and I started looking for places where I could find play as a methodology. One year ago, I wrote these notes about "play as method" to see if I could think through some of this:

> If we think of play as a method, then play itself is a way of doing research and making knowledge. Play is a mode of inquiry that can unsettle assumptions, surface new relations, and open up creative, critical ways of thinking. It disrupts dominant assumptions about what counts as valid knowledge and who gets to produce it. By disrupting the Cartesian divide between mind and body—and the related separation of play from learning—play opens up more integrated, imaginative, and critically reflective ways of knowing.

Around the same time, I started getting involved in FRC projects, and discovered that rather than reading and theorizing about "play as method," I was living it in the everyday encounters with children and teachers, with materials, with spaces, and with colleagues.

The possibility to engage in so many projects, to interact with so many different viewpoints, to meet international colleagues in spaces that move forward a multiplicity of voices and ideas and keep complexities alive, especially in a world that constantly tries to simplify and generalize and reduce—this has helped give a new shape and direction to what it means to do research. For an early career scholar

and lifelong practitioner, particularly working inside the field of education, promoting complexity, holding space for tension between ideas and bringing different perspectives together in generative ways, is an approach I believe matters deeply for not only the future of education, but for the present as well.

Being able to experience this firsthand has allowed me to stand more firmly in my belief that play is a way of imagining the world we want, and of making it real together.

Shared projects within Play Explore Research: the Caffarri Centre as a research hub

Barbara Donnici
P.E.R. Project Manager, Fondazione Reggio Children

Before I begin talking about this part of the project, I'd like to share how I feel as the project manager of *Play Explore Research*: I feel deeply grateful for the work of all my colleagues who are here today, and whom you've already met.

There is also Giulia Sberveglieri, who works behind the scenes, and there are colleagues in Reggio Emilia: Chiara Baldelli, Marina Rossi, and the entire staff of Fondazione Reggio Children. I would also like to thank our Director for his trust, and for the freedom he gives us to move forward with our work. I would also like to thank Lisa Goddard and all the PhD students, not only for accompanying us throughout the P.E.R. project, but also for the shared work we carry out at Caffarri.

I'm here to share with you one specific area of the project, called Shared Projects. As Giulia Ferrari mentioned earlier, this area is closely connected to the creation of our research centre, the Caffarri Centre, and to the many activities taking place in this new space.

Caffarri is a former feed-mill that has been regenerated and transformed into a research centre. What is particularly interesting is not only the building itself, but also its location. It is situated in a very distinctive neighbourhood of Reggio Emilia, an area that has grown by 35% over the past fifteen years, where the birth rate is higher than in the rest of the city, and where there is also a higher presence of families with a migration background. All of this akes it a particularly meaningful hub for research. This is what Cafari looks like today.

We chose to design Caffarri as a highly flexible space, one that can be rearranged and adapted depending on the activities taking place. Caffarri is home to the Remida centre, introduced earlier by Eloisa, and to the scintillae-play and learning in the digital age research area exploring education

in the digital age. It is also the seat of the PhD course in Reggio Childhood Studies, with a studio space for doctoral students on the first floor.

The activities that have been developed, and that continue to develop, at Caffarri were created as part of the project, but they are designed to continue even after the project formally ends.

Many of the workshops mentioned earlier were developed at Caffarri. Some already existed, while others were newly created. In total, we developed ten pilot workshops, new workshop formats, which we now offer to participants in the *Play Explore Research* conference-actions, as well as to those who come to Caffarri to research with us. These include teachers, children, schools, and also children together with their parents and families.

Many of these workshops emerge through collaboration with children themselves; in some cases, they grow directly from children's ideas. Across the work at Caffarri, there are a few guiding questions that function as a common thread.

These are intentionally open questions: Can we learn through play? Do we learn when we play? Where does playfulness lead us if we allow it to manifest freely, in all its forms and phases, if we let it move between our minds, our hands, and our bodies? Here are some statements from children we worked with at a primary school in Reggio Emilia:

> ... We decided to create a game because sometimes, if you don't understand something, playing can help you figure it out.
> A game is better because while you're playing, you're having fun. You don't even realize it, but you're learning!

Through the work at Caffarri centre, we are also intentionally trying to move beyond the 0–6 age range, and to engage with older children as well as with teachers who work with them. In this context, pedagogical documentation plays a crucial role. You've already had a glimpse of this today through the presentations shared by colleagues.

Within the P.E.R. project, we developed an observation grid as a shared tool to support our research. It is structured around different dimensions, areas of focus, and observation indicators, and it helps us understand what happens during the workshops we design and facilitate. The grid is a flexible tool that may be used to look closely at the participants' point of view, focusing on how their playing–learning processes shift and evolve throughout the experience. Ot it invites us to step back and ask how the workshop itself is work-

ing: how learning and play are intertwined through activities, materials, and the use of space, and how qualities such as motivation, curiosity, exploration, joy, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, cooperation, and multiple forms of expression are being activated.

It also helps us reflect on the role of the facilitators: how agency is supported, how initiative is encouraged, and how playfulness is allowed to take the lead. In this way, the observation grid becomes a common language for learning together from what unfolds in the workshops.

And speaking of the pilot workshops, there is one experience in particular that was developed within P.E.R., as part of *Play Explore Research*.

I would now like to invite Chiara Spaggiari to share this experience with us.

Exploring the sound of the Italian language: a workshop experience

Chiara Spaggiari
P.E.R. Project Officer, Fondazione Reggio Children

The development of new language learning methodologies often emerges from unexpected collaborations and shared exploration. In my presentation I would like to detail the journey of a unique workshop, rooted in the pedagogical philosophy of Reggio Emilia and Playful Learning, that we tried to adapt to enrich the learning of the Italian language in a global context.

The concept for the workshop was sparked by an experience at the conference- action in Johannesburg last autumn. During the event, various institutions participated in different workshop areas. Among the participants involved there were two representatives of the Dante Alighieri Society,an Italian government NGO with a network spanning 74 countries, dedicated to promoting the Italian language and culture.

Two participants from the Society, including the director of one of their schools, attended a workshop of the conference-action and discovered the metaphor of "the hundred languages", a concept that emphasizes exploring and learning through different senses and "languages". Inspired by this approach, they proposed the idea of creating a specific learning path that would consider the principles of multiple senses exploration to the Italian language. The core objective was to explore how a language could be learned beyond traditional methods.

Following this suggestion, the team, which included also a PhD specializing in language teaching methodology, Davide Perrotta, co-designed a new workshop's proposal. A pilot version was implemented in the Hanoi conference-action * in September 2025.

The initiative was guided by several key research questions:

- Is it possible to approach language learning primarily through sound and imagination?
- How do the senses contribute to the interpretation of the sound of a word?
- Is there a reciprocity between the sound of the spoken language and the culture of a community?

In the Hanoi workshop, for instance, participants successfully found connections between the sounds of Italian and cultural elements that reminded them of Italy, activating a playful way to explore the words and sounds of a foreign language.

The theoretical framework currently being used references the centrality of relational aspects and affection in engaging

learners with a new language. This is seamlessly blended with the “hundred languages” background, emphasizing sensory exploration and connecting with the whole body in the act of learning.

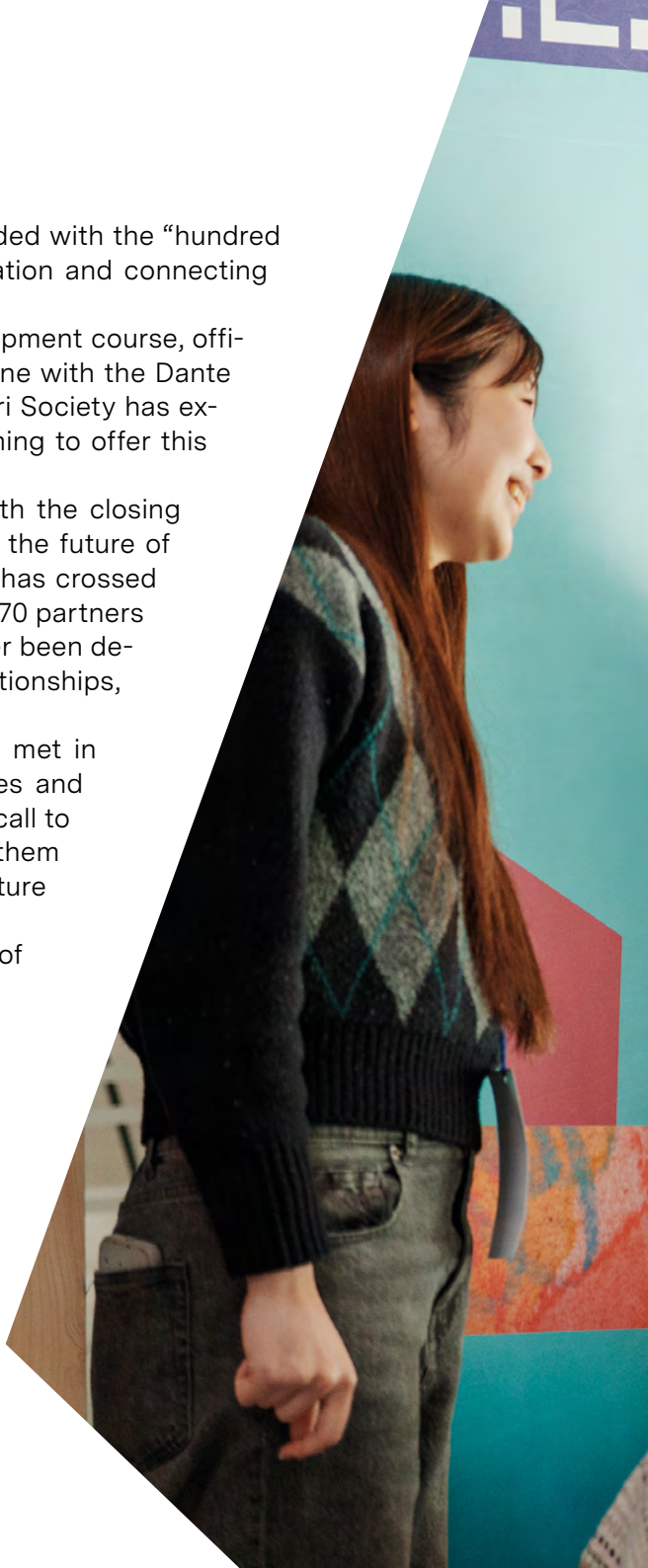
The workshop developed into a professional development course, officially begun with colleagues in Reggio interacting online with the Dante Alighieri teachers in Johannesburg. The Dante Alighieri Society has expressed its interest in continuing this partnership, aiming to offer this innovative experience to other schools worldwide.

The P.E.R. conference-action in Billund marked both the closing of a journey and the opening of new questions about the future of education. Throughout the P.E.R. project, this journey has crossed countries, contexts, and cultures, engaging more than 70 partners from15 different countries. Yet the experience has never been defined by numbers alone; it has been shaped by the relationships, exchanges, and reflections that made it possible.

Since it was not possible to have all the partners met in presence we sought another way to keep their voices and presence close. For this reason, we launched an open call to all partners involved over the past two years, inviting them to respond to the question: “What do you see in the future of education?”

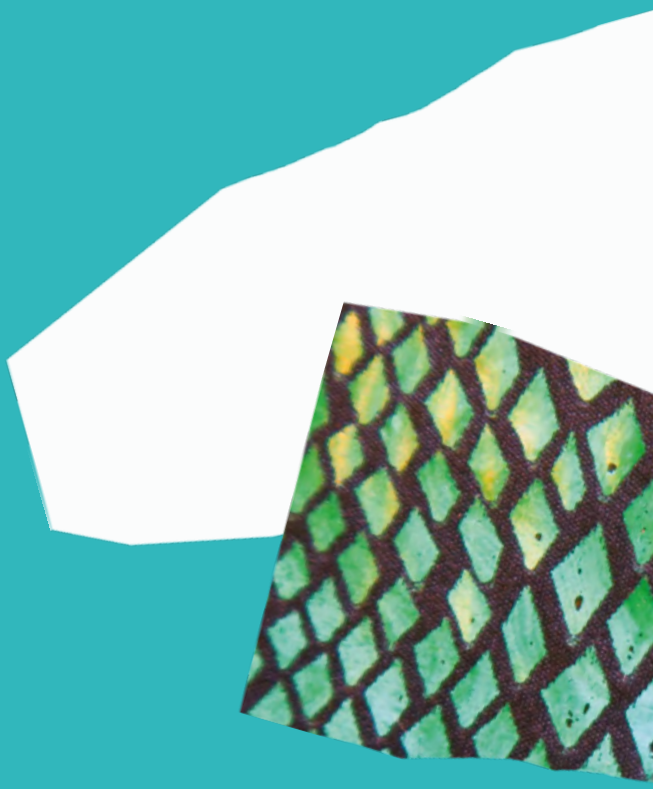
The contributions brought together a wide range of voices that reflect the spirit of the project.

Watch the video with all the partners contributions here




Play
Explore
Research

P.E.R. workshops as living spaces for experimentation and dialogue



The Billund P.E.R. conference-action offered a rich and articulated landscape of workshops conceived as spaces of pedagogical research. Within the P.E.R. framework, workshops are a space where concepts, questions, and visions are explored through embodied reflective experiences.

The workshops brought together educators, researchers, artists, designers, and partners from different cultural and institutional contexts, creating a fertile ground for dialogue between theory and practice, policy and pedagogy, human and more-than-human perspectives. The proposals invited participants to engage actively with questions of educational quality, creativity, sustainability, inclusion, and the future of learning in a time of profound social and technological transformation.

Across the workshops,participants were invited to explore education as a collective practice, one that values children and adults as co-constructors of knowledge, capable of imagining new possibilities for learning and living together.

From educational policy to dance, from regenerated materials to taste, from student voice to computational storytelling, from more-than-human play to inclusive science education, the workshops reflected the plurality of languages, perspectives, and approaches that characterize Play Ex-

plore Research. Together, they contributed to shaping a vision of learning as playful, inclusive, responsible, and deeply connected to the world we inhabit.

Building the pillars of a quality education policy

Fondazione Reggio Children

Together, we will explore the essential components for developing a quality education policy. In the course of the activity, the key factors that ensure the resilience and durability of educational policies will be analysed, and the frequency with which they should be updated to remain effective and relevant will be discussed.

What are the fundamental pillars for a quality education policy? Which elements are crucial to ensure the resilience of the educational policy? How often should an educational policy be updated to maintain its effectiveness over time?

We could ask the tree

Fondazione Reggio Children

Read, interpret, discover the world...researching codes and mys-


The Meaning of Life

terious modes of communication around us to invent new ones through a range of expressive languages.

What is a code and how does it show up? How many and how diverse codes can we identify in our daily spaces? How can we create new ones from our analysis and translation of those already existing?

Listening to waste matter

Fondazione Reggio Children and Remida

In education, matter is often exploited and abused, as in the productive world. Listening to matter, and waste matter, helps us reflect on our relationship with the planet's living and nonliving resources, practicing our ecological thinking.

What stories do materials tell? And what stories do waste materials tell? Are they different stories? Are we able to listen to these stories and bring them to light? Can we give voice to things? Can we do a leaf dance? Or act out a bottle? Or tell the story of a piece of paper thrown away?

Dancing to become more human

Fondazione Reggio Children

Revealing ourselves through movement. Speaking about our deepest selves with our bodies. Sensations Images Experiences can be told, read, seen in movements. It's a conversation we can participate in. A space we can create to meet each other in a safe place to explore, play and research for connections, bridge the gap, express our uniqueness in a collective context. A workshop on dance conceived as instant composition in which movements arise from life experiences. Dancing to the rhythm of our feelings, our ideas, our relationships. Dancing in a community to discover the joy of moving together.

What does the body reveal about our humanity? How does movement unite us and create bonds?

The questions playground

Fondazione Reggio Children and PhD Reggio Childhood Studies

Learning begins with curiosity, and when learners are motivated and passionate, education becomes a shared adventure. Through a process of collective reflection and action research, we'll focus on how open, inclusive, and generative questions can nurture motivation, creativity, and deeper learning for everyone involved.

How can we cultivate creativity and create space for children's competencies to emerge and grow in both formal and non-formal educational contexts?

Playing with the more-than-human: rethinking play in the Anthropocene

Fondazione Reggio Children and PhD Reggio Childhood Studies

Explore play beyond the human in this hands-on workshop. Through research vignettes, playful material encounters, and documenting play, participants will examine how materials and more-than-human entities "play-with" us, inviting a reconceptualization of play in education in the Anthropocene.

What happens to our understandings of play when materials "play back"? How can documentation reveal play as a shared, ecological, and world-making practice, rather than a human-centered activity?

Exploring the sounds of the italian language

Fondazione Reggio Children

Playing with the sounds of the Italian language means stepping into a world made of rhythm, echoes, and vibrations. Italian is not just a system of rules or meanings, but a soundscape to be explored with curiosity and wonder. A single word is

enough to spark an image, inspire an idea, awaken a suggestion. It is a journey that begins with listening: what colors does a sound carry with it? What emotions does a syllable awaken? What secret music lies hidden in every word?

Is it possible to imagine a path of approaching the Italian language through sound and imagination? What does the sound of a word evoke in sensory terms? How do the senses contribute to the interpretation of the sound of a word? Does a reciprocity exist between the sound of spoken language and the culture of a community?

The Senses of Taste

Pause – Atelier dei Sapori, Cirfood

"The Senses of Taste": discovering food as a living, multisensory experience through seasonal vegetables and biodiversity. Participants will explore tables of scents, colors, sounds, and shapes, where taste intertwines with curiosity and wonder.

How can we recognize different tastes through smell or touch? What happens when we taste food with our eyes closed? How can we represent taste through color, shape, or sound? If a flavor were an emotion, which one would it be? Which materials or tools help us tell the story of a tasting experience? Do all seasons have the same colors and flavors? How is taste connected to the earth and time (seasons, climate, care)? What memories or stories come to mind when tasting certain foods? How can we share with others our own way of "feeling" taste? What do

we learn from others when discovering new flavors together? How does taste help us understand the world?

Children as co-designers: planning units of inquiry with student voice and choice

International School of Billund

This workshop presents research done over the past year and a half around building student voice and choice into learning. The work was done with students on planning units of inquiry, building questioning skills and encouraging students to take action in their learning. This workshop will provide opportunities to learn about how this has been done in a Primary 4 and 5 class , as told by students from the class, followed by the chance to try out some thinking routines and planning activities that can be taken back to your classroom/ learning environment.

How can students have more of a say in what and how they learn?

Little Hands, Big Creativity – playful learning through scrapbooking

International School of Billund

Discover how to teach scrapbooking to children while exploring its pedagogical benefits. Learn this creative technique that support fine motor skills, self-expression, storytelling, and confidence-building in a fun, hands-on workshop.

How does scrapbooking support the development of fine motor skills and social emotional growth in primary kids? What role does collaborative scrapbooking play in building social skills and peer communication? What's the benefit of scrapbooking in a setting of learning through play?

Emergence in education: creativity beyond the individual

International School of Billund

This hands-on workshop explores emergence (how complex, unexpected outcomes arise from simple interactions) through the lens of education and creativ-

ity. Participants will experience how collaboration, curiosity, and technology can generate results greater than the sum of their parts.

How can emergent, community-based creative processes foster intrinsic motivation and curiosity among learners? In what ways can classroom rituals and structures make the experience of curiosity and uncertainty explicit, supporting learners in embracing unpredictability as a creative force? How can AI tools be integrated as co-creative agents to amplify, rather than replace, human imagination and collective expression in educational settings?

Building inclusive classrooms with LEGO Education science

LEGO Education

Imagine a classroom where every child engages in collaborative science experiences through Learning Through Play and Universal Design for Learning. Discover how LEGO® Education Science can transform teaching. Participants will experience hands-on, standards-aligned lessons and leave with actionable strategies for inclusive, playful learning.

How can Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles be effectively integrated into core science curricula to enhance success for all students?

Creative storytelling with OctoStudio

Lifelong Kindergarten – MIT Media Lab

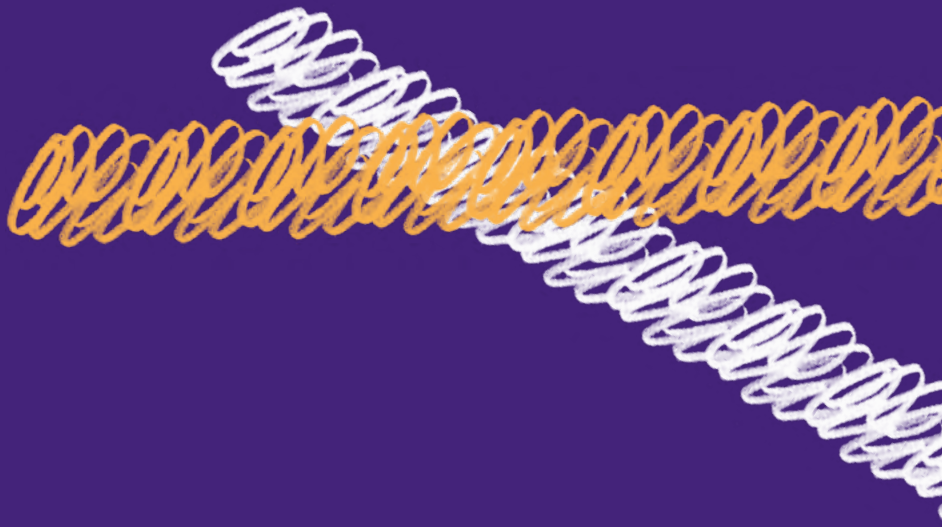
This workshop will invite participants to explore how to use the OctoStudio app to engage learners in making projects that bring in images and sounds from the world around them. Participants will have the opportunity to create using physical and digital materials in playful ways to tell imaginative stories about themselves and the future.

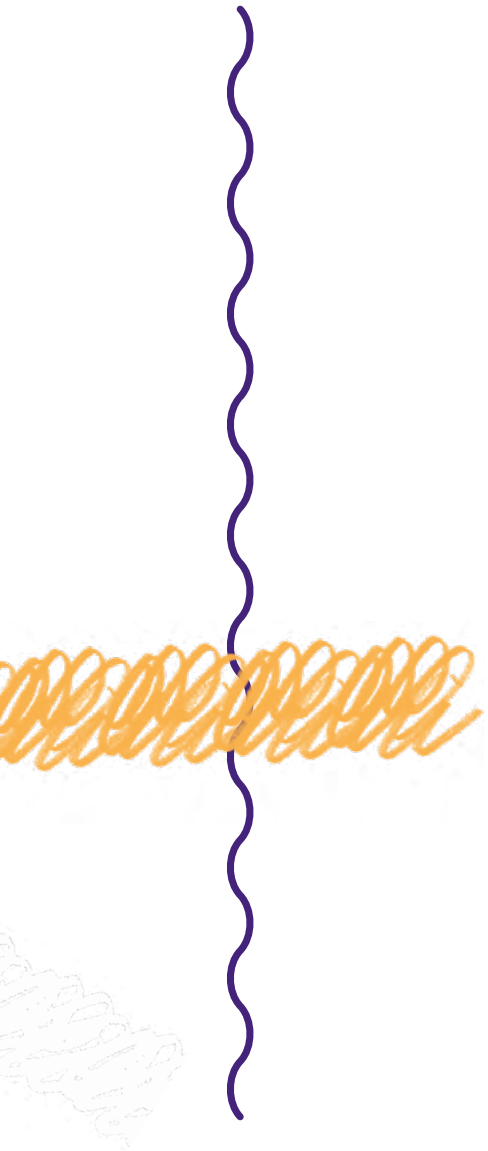
How can storytelling be used as a medium to engage young people in computational tinkering? How can this be implemented while also fostering creativity and providing youth agency?


Three solutions for
three different
grade bands


octostudio

Let’s meet along the way





The interactive installation *Let's Meet Along the Way* emerged from the intention to end the long journey of the P.E.R. project in a playful way.

The aim was for this final moment to take the form of a collective action, one that could convey the sense of a participatory community that took shape at each stage of the journey and through encounters with people along the way.

But what form could such an action take?

P.E.R. has brought into dialogue different countries, experiences, and practices. Throughout the project, participants experienced in concrete ways what it means to cross boundaries, create connections, and build bridges and pathways, both symbolic and geographical, that bring people together while collectively navigating small and large challenges.

This became the challenge proposed: to find ways and strategies to meet along the way.

LEGO bricks were chosen for their accessibility of use and their constructive and creative potential. They were intentionally combined with "intentional obstacles", symbolizing the obstacles that can be encountered in any experience. The installation unfolded within a large shared space, offering multiple starting points.

The challenge of building pathways to

meet one another required climbing over, leaning on, going around, crossing through, or passing beneath these obstacles. In this way, people of all ages were invited to explore different ways of coming together and intertwining, constructing connections through shared resources and individual ideas, *brick by brick*.

The confirmation that difficulties can be overcome together came on the very day of the activity, when, while setting up the space, we encountered some structural constraints. We had to decide quickly whether to remove or reposition the cardboard mats that were meant to host the installation, and so the group of atelieristi moved swiftly, testing different possibilities. As these long cardboard strips were shifted, unexpectedly beautiful waves began to form, captivating everyone. We decided to keep them: they would become the obstacles to be negotiated with the LEGO bricks.

In this way, a problem, an unforeseen incident, was transformed into an oppor-

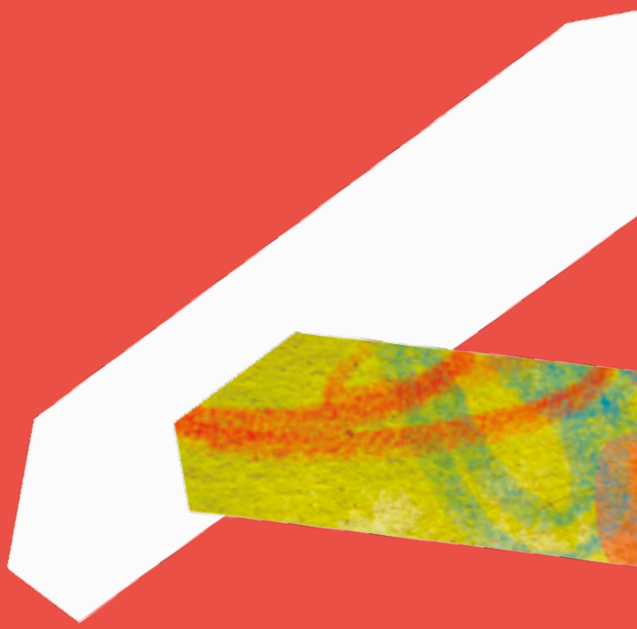
tunity for learning and play, made possible by the group's openness and collaborative attitude.

The activity unfolded in a light and relaxed atmosphere. Families, children, and adults embraced the challenge and worked together to create diverse and original pathways, stable or precarious, multiform and polychromatic, complex and richly varied. What emerged was an interweaving of gazes, hands, and creative possibilities, giving rise to composite architectures that brought together ideas, skills, and different perspectives, all oriented toward the shared goal of meeting *along the way*.

It was a space that welcomed every posture and form of engagement. A collective action that took the shape we had hoped for: a participatory one, the only form we believe truly enables both knowing and coming to know one another.

Perhaps, in this way, we have responded, at least in part, to the question Carla Rinaldi left us, a question we wish to carry with us for a long time to come: *What do we see in the future of education?*

Conclusions



The seventh and final P.E.R. conference-action in Billund represented both a culmination and a new beginning: a moment to reflect on a journey that has crossed continents, cultures, and diverse educational communities. From Reggio Emilia to Biillund, through Brazil, South Africa, the United States, Kenya, Vietnam, P.E.R. has fostered a global platform for dialogue, research, and collective exploration of playful learning. Returning to Billund, where the roots of the collaboration between Fondazione Reggio Children and The LEGO Foundation are so deeply intertwined with educational history, offered participants the opportunity to reconnect with a place that has long been a symbol of innovation in education and design.

The conference-action foregrounded the importance of listening, responsibility, and trust as pillars of education. Across presentations and workshops, participants were reminded that technological innovations, including artificial intelligence, must be approached in ways that are guided by humanity, ethics, and the core values of learning. Listening to children, educators, and families emerged as an essential practice for understanding lived experiences, fostering agency, and creating contexts where experimentation and creativity can flourish. Alongside listening, adult responsibility was highlighted as fundamental for shaping

environments where children can explore, learn, and thrive safely and meaningfully.

The workshops and initiatives presented in Billund, from playful material encounters at Caffarri to collaborative design projects with LEGO bricks, showcased the transformative potential of play, creativity, and co-construction of knowledge. Participants engaged in hands-on explorations of dance, storytelling, sensory experiences, inclusive science education, and emergent learning processes, all emphasizing education as a collective and participatory endeavor. These experiences reaffirmed that learning is most meaningful when it allows for curiosity, collaboration, and the active agency of children as co-creators.

At the heart of the conference-action was the reflection on core educational values that endure beyond technological and social change. Democratic citizenship, access to lifelong education, inclusion, and ethical engagement were underscored as non-negotiable foundations for building resilient educational systems. Similarly, care, trust, and openness to diversity, were recognized as the relational conditions that make learning possible, allowing both children and adults to imagine new possibilities together.

The interactive installation *Let's Meet Along the Way* embodied the sense of P.E.R.: the power of meeting, collaborating, and overcoming obstacles together. Through intentional challenges, and collective creativity with LEGO bricks, participants of all ages experienced the act of building connections, symbolic of the bridges P.E.R. has sought to build across cultures, disciplines, and educational practices. This playful, participatory approach exemplified how learning, research, and community intertwine, offering a vivid metaphor for the ongoing journey that education entails.

Finally, the Billund conference-action paid homage to the legacy of Carla Rinaldi, whose vision of dialogue, reciprocity, and ethical commitment continues to inspire educators worldwide. Her question "what do we see in the future of education?" remains open, inviting adults and educators to listen deeply, embrace challenges, and view the world anew through the eyes of children. It is in this willingness to be attentive, responsive, and co-creative that the future of education begins.

The conference-action in Billund did not mark an endpoint, but a moment of synthesis and renewal. Rooted in long-standing relationships and enriched by diverse encounters across the world, *Play Explore Research* continues to affirm education as a collective and evolving practice, one that places play, research, and children's rights at the heart of imagining the future of learning.

Watch the final video of the conference here

Play Explore Research: ten cultural insights from a global pedagogical journey

Play Explore Research (PER) unfolded over two and a half years as a travelling laboratory of ideas, practices, and encounters across continents, cultures, and educational traditions. Conceived not as a replicable programme but as a process to be lived, P.E.R. emerged from the strong cultural and ethical connection between Fondazione Reggio Children and the LEGO Foundation, and from Carla Rinaldi's vision of research at the intersection of play, education, learning, solidarity and development.

Throughout its journey, P.E.R. generated a set of core pedagogical, cultural, and ethical insights that define its deeper meaning beyond events, workshops, and publications.

1. Innovating adult education through workshop-based and interactive learning

Adult education was reconfigured as a relational process. Moving away from transmissive models, P.E.R. positioned workshops and ateliers as epistemic spaces where knowledge was generated through action, dialogue, reflection, and documentation. The workshops became a central strategy in this transformation. As a space of research rather than instruction, it allowed adults to explore questions without predetermined outcomes, to test hypotheses, and to learn from uncertainty. Collective ex-

ploration replaced individual performance as a process of collective meaning-making, closely aligned with how learning actually occurs in complex professional and cultural contexts. Adults entered learning with their whole selves, intellectual, emotional, bodily, and cultural, experiencing exploratory, collective learning. P.E.R. made visible that playfulness and creativity remain essential conditions for lifelong learning.

2. Valuing the cultural heritage of the contexts encountered

PER consistently valued the cultural heritage of the contexts encountered, approaching environments as active educational agents. Each encounter began with listening rather than with predefined formats. Local materials, histories, languages, and practices became living resources for inquiry, grounding learning in place and resisting extractive or instrumental relationships with contexts. Education was thus reframed as a dialogue with environments, affirming that educational quality is strengthened when it is culturally situated and context-responsive.

3. Understanding educational practices through their anthropological meaning

An anthropological lens guided the understanding of educational practices. Rather than ranking or evaluating practices against external standards, P.E.R. asked why practices exist, which values they express, and what images of the child, the adult, and the future they imply. Practices were read as cultural texts embedded in social, historical, and political ecologies. This approach enabled critical reflection without judgment, grounding innovation in understanding rather than intervention.

4. Re-centering play as a foundational condition for learning

Across all contexts, P.E.R. re-centred play as a foundational condition for learning. Play was understood as a serious cultural practice and a form of inquiry through which hypotheses are tested, meanings negotiated, and uncertainty embraced. By placing play at the centre of adult learning as well, PER disrupted linear developmental narratives and affirmed play as a lifelong disposition.

5. Recognising adults as playful learners

The project also revealed adults as playful learners, particularly when learning environments were characterised by trust and the suspension of performance-driven expectations. Play softened hierarchies,

fostered relational trust, and reactivated embodied and imaginative forms of thinking often marginalised in professional cultures.

6. Expanding adult competencies through unexpected pathways

P.E.R. expanded adult competencies through unexpected pathways, designing workshops that displaced participants from familiar professional territories. Competence emerged indirectly through dance, policy reflection, work with discarded materials, and digital–natural dialogues. Learning crossed cognitive, emotional, bodily, and social dimensions, reframing competence as an open, evolving process rooted in curiosity and exploration rather than in skill acquisition alone.

7. Creating a dialogue between Reggio Emilia and other educational traditions

A central dimension of P.E.R. was the dialogue between Reggio Emilia and other educational traditions. This dialogue was intentionally framed not as dissemination or replication, but as reciprocal exchange. Local pedagogical cultures challenged and reinterpreted Reggio-inspired values, generating hybrid reflections and returning critical questions to Reggio Emilia itself. Educational quality emerged through translation and negotiation rather than fidelity to models.

8. Building global research relationships with universities

P.E.R. also built global research relationships with universities, conceived as long-term partnerships grounded in shared inquiry. These collaborations bridged theory and practice, privileging dialogue over extraction and fostering co-ownership of research questions. Knowledge was generated through encounter, sustaining an international research ecosystem rooted in ethical responsibility and contextual sensitivity.

9. Affirming listening as the foundation of educational quality

Throughout the project, listening emerged as a foundational stance for educational quality. Listening was understood as ethical and political before being pedagogical: a posture of openness to people and contexts. By redistributing power within educational encounters, listening enabled reciprocity, co-construction, and democratic participation. Quality was recognised not through external validation,

but through participants' ability to see themselves and their contexts reflected in the work.

10. Placing an ethics of respect at the centre of educational encounters

At its core, P.E.R. placed an ethics of respect at the centre of every educational encounter. Respect took the form of humility, responsibility, and care, shaping how the project entered contexts and navigated cultural and power asymmetries. Innovation was redefined not as novelty or scale, but as the quality of relationships generated and the dignity preserved in each encounter.

Concluding reflection

Play Explore Research was, ultimately, a project about how we meet. Not only about where we travelled or what we organised, but about the quality of the encounters we chose to cultivate across ages, cultures, disciplines, and geographies. Over two and a half years, P.E.R. took shape as a travelling research journey, demonstrating that education is not primarily produced through programmes or frameworks, but through relationships, through the ways people listen, respond, hesitate, and act together.

Throughout the project, play emerged not as a methodological tool but as a research stance. Play opened spaces in which questions could arise without the pressure of immediate resolution, where imagination could coexist with rigour, and where uncertainty became a productive condition rather than a weakness. In this sense, play revealed itself as one of the most powerful ways humans explore complexity, generate meaning, and remain open to transformation, at every age.

Listening proved to be a foundational condition for educational quality. Listening to children and adults, to practices and places, to traditions and tensions allowed learning to become situated, recognisable, and meaningful. As repeatedly affirmed in Carla Rinaldi's thinking, listening is an ethical and political act before it is a pedagogical one. Through listening, education shifted from delivery to co-construction, from prescription to participation. Without listening, educational initiatives risk becoming performative; with listening, they become accountable and legitimate.

Equally central was an ethics of respect. Respect shaped how PER entered different contexts, how it engaged with cultural traditions, and how it navigated asymmetries of power and visibility. Respect was not treated as an outcome of education, but as its starting point, protecting educational encounters from simplification and instru-

mentalisation, and anchoring innovation in care and responsibility.

In this way, Play Explore Research stands not only as a completed project, but as a pedagogical stance. It invites educators, researchers, institutions, and policymakers to reconsider how learning is designed, how knowledge is produced, and how educational encounters are ethically inhabited. In a plural and interconnected world, P.E.R. suggests that the future of education does not lie in convergence or standardisation, but in the capacity to explore together, through play, through dialogue, and through sustained attention to the other.

In this sense, P.E.R. does not conclude. It leaves behind a commitment: to continue meeting diversity with curiosity, to hold complexity without simplification, and to recognise play as one of the most powerful ways humans learn, research, and imagine their future.

As Carla Rinaldi said at the opening of the Denver conference-action:

"And now it is up to you."

This project would not have been possible without the people and partners we have known, as well as those we met along the way. From the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, whose departments promoted Italian language and culture worldwide and supported Fondazione Reggio Children from the very beginning; to local organizations, foundations, and schools in both large cities, villages and slums; to long-time and new university partners across the United States, Vietnam, Kenya, South Africa, Italy and beyond; to those who have been part of Reggio's story for many years; and to others introduced to us through The LEGO Foundation or encountered along the way.

All of them made this journey, this exchange, and this learning possible. Each meeting, conversation, and shared experience left a lasting impression, reminding us that at the heart of every project, it is the people who make the work meaningful.

Cristian Fabbi, CEO of Fondazione Reggio Children

The *P.E.R. – Play, Explore, Research* project by Fondazione Reggio Children-Centro Loris Malaguzzi, made possible by the collaboration with The LEGO Foundation, is a global platform for exchange and research for teachers, educators, researchers, families and administrators to promote playful approaches to learning for children, young people and adults.

This series of publications brings together the contributions that characterised each individual conference-action in the seven countries involved in the project, starting with the launch of the P.E.R. project in Italy, in Reggio Emilia, in November 2023.

This volume presents the proceedings of the final conference of the project, held in Billund, Denmark, in November 2025 – a culminating moment of dialogue, reflection and shared learning that marks both the closing of a journey and the opening of new perspectives for research and practice.

The conference was dedicated to the memory of Carla Rinaldi, former President of Fondazione Reggio Children and a leading voice of the Reggio Emilia Approach. A tireless advocate for children's rights and a central figure in the pedagogy of listening, she continues to inspire an ethical commitment to dialogue and to childhood.