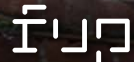


Gianfranco Bandini

# **PUBLIC HISTORY OF EDUCATION**

## **A Brief Introduction**

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## INTRODUCTION

# In Schools, and in All Educational Situations, Public History Is exactly What We Need

This volume has an unusual structure that traces my experience as a lecturer and researcher chronologically: my first encounters with public history, mainly made up of North American literature, the first paper on these topics presented at an international conference of educational history scholars, the attempts to outline a theoretical and practical profile for public history in education, and, in tandem with all this, my own trials as a public historian, mainly within master's and postgraduate university courses.

As you can see, it is a biographical journey, a kind of *ego-histoire*, which I did not want to rework in an abstract way by removing the thread of memory, the various passages that have made the role that public history can play in education increasingly clear to me. I believed it was very useful to retain this chronological, sequential, personal and biographical order of my progressive awareness as my experiences and contacts with other interested colleagues (inside and outside the university) became more frequent. If others also recognise themselves in this path, or in some of its components, we can more easily collaborate, exchange ideas and comments, criticism and proposals for improvement. So rather than hiding it, make it open, in the typical style of public history.

Our personal equation, abounding in both studies but also in many experiences and encounters, is in fact an integral part of the historian's work, stretched between his irrepressible subjectivity and the need for the rational and as much as possible argued and objective sharing of the result of the analysis and interpretation of sources.

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Following such a path makes it easier to understand how important it is to be aware of the meanings and implications of public history. However interesting a study can be made of its antecedents, it is not accurate to equate the experiences of the last century with those of today, whether we are talking about the Italian or the North American context, which began using this approach as early as the 1970s, responding in an original way to the crisis of history. Even then, some very interesting earlier experiences could be found, all sharing the role played by certain institutions, first and foremost the museums, and the communicative intentions, of connecting with society. The same procedure can also be carried out in the Italian context, recalling in particular the experiences of oral historians and anthropologists. All this is entirely justified from a historiographical point of view and allows us to better understand many aspects of the relationship of history with memory, of the relationship between research and territory. However, here I would like to emphasise the crucial role played by the awareness of the public history approach and its effects when a stable and structured relationship is created between people, groups, associations, territorial institutions, organisations, in essence between all those who want to make history in a participatory and meaningful way to meet today's existential and cognitive challenges.

Therefore, while evaluating with great interest and pleasure what has been done in the past (with intentions that generally partly coincide with public history as we understand it today), we must not forget the potential and originality that comes from belonging to a movement that has national and international roots. Membership of the *Italian Public History Association*, from this point of view, represents a very important step, not only on an individual level, but also for the professional and cultural associations and scientific societies that promoted its birth and those that subsequently joined it.

For these reasons, the following pages show the intersection of personal experience and theoretical questions, the moment that saw the need arise in me to find new ways to make history in education and, above all, to do so without forgetting the pressing demands of the present, which always pose new and sometimes unexpected questions to research.

It can be rightly said that this link between academic research and society, in particular between the university and the world of education, has always been a characteristic feature of all pedagogical research, not only of a historical nature. This is already clearly visible in the first generation of post-Second World War Italian scholars, from Lamberto Borghi to Raffaele Laporta, in their constant commitment to building a democratic society, starting with the school, understood as an educating community in dialogue with the surrounding world.

In addition, and this is of particular interest, the area of studies and research dealing with educational issues has always been a crossroads of different disciplinary approaches, which from time to time have generated hybridisations or conflicts, specialisations and new research paradigms.

Building on this established tradition, in the context of the great and epoch-making changes of the new century, a new perception arose in many historians

of education of the need to renew themes and methodological approaches, and more generally the very identity of the profession and its social image.

The first requirement is that educational historians (and historians in general, tout court) should make a new and original contribution to the training of teachers (initial and in-service), offering a tangible option to the declining presence of the historical approach in education. More generally, the basic idea is that history should be considered as an intellectual tool to address current issues in the educational professions (the school headteacher, the educator, the support teacher, etc.) and not just to provide a static representation of a distant past, useful only for passing a competition or a qualification. From this point of view, the specific contribution of history is the enhancement of the reflective and critical character of education. In the whole area of the helping professions (crossing over with the Medical Humanities) it is therefore possible to establish new links and projects that do not neglect history, making individuals aware of the factors that over time have contributed to the current situation, the forces that still act potently on us today, both as individuals and as a community.

The idea of involving public history more profoundly in educational matters has to do with the perception of its great potential, partially but not fully explored. The concept of *public history of education* was coined to delimit a specific field of activity, recognising that the education sector has certain characteristics that require a detailed and in-depth study, and also a specific adaptation to educational needs: a process that, according to a characteristic approach of public history, continues over time and is nurtured by improvements due to the continuous interrelations between a series of actors, between institutions and communities, between theoretical conceptualisations and experiences in the field. As a result, in 2018 I proposed a *Public History of Education Manifesto* to start a collective research experience, together with many other people and institutions. The *Manifesto* presents itself as a specification and application of the *Manifesto of Italian Public History*, to relaunch a new image of historical knowledge as a fundamental and indispensable tool for education.

These pages therefore describe a process of awareness that has grown over time and has profited from relationships with other colleagues, academic and otherwise, who have contributed enormously to reinforce my convictions not only on the potential of doing public history in education, but on the absolute necessity of embarking on this new path. I stress new, because it is not a matter of pouring old wine into new barrels, as too many people still think.

In this cultural itinerary, if participation in the Italian association was certainly an important moment, the same must be said for the relationship with the schools that took up the invitation to do public history. With their passion and commitment far beyond their hourly and curricular obligations, the teachers and students demonstrated that there is a need for history and that public history can respond to it. It allows for better and more meaningful teaching of the discipline of history, expanding the possibilities of didactics, but above all it allows for its specific contribution in transversal education, such as education for citizenship or intercultural and interreligious dialogue. It allows us to leave

the four walls of the classroom, initiating an exploration of the participatory and workshop dimension of history, knowledge and appreciation of cultural heritage, in relation to the territory and its main cultural institutions: museums, libraries, archives, archaeological sites, monumental complexes.

Public history, enthusiastically and passionately embraced by schools, shows us the way forward in other educational settings as well, in the direction of meaningful and transformative learning, under the auspices of participation, building shared authority, and the territorial and community dimension.

Florence, 3 October 2023

## Educational Memories and Public History: A Necessary Meeting\*

Historical research in the educational area has been enriched, especially since the turn of the century, by new forms of inquiry, particularly within the international community, through conferences, summer schools and other initiatives involving an increasing number of national research groups. School history, perhaps the most traditional among the various areas of educational research, shrug off an insistent focus on the normative, political and institutional dimension, aimed at a reconstruction of the past which is richer in various facets and more attentive to personal experiences and collective dimensions, even in their emotional and implied implications (Burke and Grosvenor 2011; Burke et al. 2013; Braster et al. 2011; Caruso 2015). At the same time, it began to move away from the exclusive reference to the national state and its borders in order to explore a wider dimension, both in a comparative perspective and with reference to 'world history' (Beattie 2002; Crossley et al. 2007; Crook and McCulloch 2002; Depaepe 2002; Sobe and Ness 2010; Stearns 2011).

In this context, I think that the use of a public history approach in education means placing our research within the framework of the renewal of studies and, at the same time, opening up some interesting possibilities of study, also emerging at the interface of different disciplinary traditions. However, to justify this working hypothesis and to demonstrate its reasonableness, it is essential to fol-

\* The first version of this chapter was published as Bandini 2017. The present chapter is an updated version of that work.

low a process of reflection that allows us to connect some important elements, often perceived as separate rather than an integral part of a single process of change. Then we can point to the relationship between history and memory, the contribution of oral history, the rapid changes in the digital history and the birth of public history before finally focussing on a case study that verifies the usefulness of this type of methodological and thematic approach.

### 1. Reflecting on the Past of Memory and History

Historical knowledge, in Italy and elsewhere, spoke at length with respect to the relationship between history and memory, particularly around some issues raised many questions of interpretation. Consider, for example, disputes about the Resistance, on the *Anni di Piombo* (Years of Lead) or the history of entire social classes of workers or marginal subjects such as workers of the rice fields (the so-called 'pickers'). The contrast between history and memory has also had polemical moments (Contini 1997; Lussana 2000), designed to highlight the differences between the two approaches: the first, of a scientific or 'objective' character, the second, of a popular and 'subjective' character. The historic canon, inherited from the experience of the nineteenth century, emphasises on the purification of the study from personal inclinations, tendency to approach the physical sciences, investigation procedures, as evidenced by the quantitative historiography, involving suspicions of personal accounts and approximate descriptions, or descriptions deemed such.

The evolution of the historical debate has led to a substantial agreement that you cannot frequently choose a research methodology for its assumed and theoretical superiority over others: it is only in the application to a specific theme and specific objectives of study that you can evaluate the effectiveness of the methodological choices. From this point of view, there has been exemplary debate between the positions of quantitative and qualitative research, which resulted in greater eclecticism and tolerance for different ways of recording history.

As regards, in particular, a way to overcome and dissolve the contrast between memory and history into a more open view of the many dimensions of history, is to consider the truly unique and original contribution of the use of oral sources. When we talk about oral history, it highlights the absolute originality of this method of interrogation of the past and its significance outside of the written document and its variability (Portelli 1990; Ritchie 2002; Thomson 2006). Certainly one cannot exclusively use oral sources while still being influenced by the other traditional sources. The searches that use it are characterised by its centrality and its incredible ability to change the perception of the historian carrying out the research. In interviews, you realise the issues, which we had not previously considered or perhaps overlooked; issues whose aspects were not present in the scientific literature and therefore were not a part of the initial intentions of research.

In fact, oral history has bypassed the conflict between history and memory, thus opening a new area of research that, for educational purposes, appears to

be largely unexplored and very interesting. At the centre of oral history, we find a source that has a specific and exceptional characteristic: it is a typically relational source, which, at the same time, is a recollection of interviews, through a relationship between the historian and the person who remembers or rather, who is recommended to recall. It is not a written, meditated and organised story, destined for a specific readership; nor is it a set of answers for a pre-printed questionnaire; it is, primarily, a meeting between the persons, between the historian who asks and listens and the witness who tells his own experience and that of others. This report, consisting of recalling of emotions as well as events, which is a key attribute of the source, has the ability to take us beyond the conflict between history and memory.

This typically anthropological approach of listening to others has founded a mode of making history attentive to personal experiences and given rise to micro-history, in accordance with a research perspective that was proposed many decades ago and practised thereafter in many areas of research (Febvre 1953).

We remember, in particular, methods similar to the so-called «thick description» proposed by Geertz (1973), which seeks to capture the observed (and owned) reality apart from factors, which may have been overlooked by the researcher due to them being a part of human experience and observation. The elements that emerge from this context may very well open a new, previously unforeseen way and we can even renew the more traditional themes at the end (e.g. taking the ideas of methodologically grounded theory that provides some useful tips even in the field of history) (Glaser 1999, 2001; Tarozzi 2008).

Oral history, from its beginning, has characteristics that distinguish it from other approaches and that are particularly suited to academic history. First, the primacy of experiences, both individual and collective, which do not always coincide, and based on whose discrepancies we should always ask ourselves; and later focus on the significance of events that take place for the people involved, rather than the cold analysis of what has happened. This approach brings us close to people's thoughts, what they have heard and felt and their joys, fears, expectations, disappointments and so on. In this way, the historical account appears to consist of many details, some of which may seem insignificant when taken individually, but which together outline a view from the base, with respect to those who lived it. At the origin, it should be remembered, Marxist tradition gives voice to subordinate social classes, the marginal classes of the past, those who spoke in dialects, had little or no literacy and barely knew how to sign their name.

Thanks to oral history, and other interesting approaches to local (or regional) history of large and established traditions, we can be sensitive towards the richness of the past and the great changes that constantly appear over time, even the differences among the experiences of places a few kilometres away from each other, especially when we move away from the twentieth century and we go into distinctly pre-industrial periods.

## 2. Contribution of Public History

Right after the contribution of oral history, we must consider a more recent and discussed occurrence – public history. As will be more evident at the end of the text, these are two approaches that have some interesting points in common and that can be used very effectively to build an all-round memory of educational history, going beyond the usual schemes. In a sense, we can assert that there is no public history without the involvement of the population and this involves the use of oral history, even when what the masses recall is not a testimony of the recent past but a commentary and discussion of a distant past spanning centuries. Even though the most interesting examples relate to contemporary history, this participatory model is applicable to each historical period (Conard 2015; Frisch 1990; Noiret 2011a; Willinsky 2005).

Public history already has a strong tradition, especially in North American and British contexts, which can be traced back to the eighties with the founding of the National Council on Public History (NCPH<sup>1</sup>).

However, here it refers to its amalgamation with the experiences of digital history, a new way to record, document and especially to communicate historical occurrences. In the early nineties, when digital history was born, a series of attempts being made to use digital technologies in historical research had begun to abandon the use of computers which had till then only been intended as an aid in the drafting of documents, calculations or as cataloguing tools. Digital public history (using the terminology that highlights a strong connection with new technologies) (Danniau 2013) is, therefore, a recent historiographical development but has had a robust and innovative tradition. Digital history also has its own unique and rich history, its evolution and dead branches, despite their appearance over the past few years (Cohen and Rosenzweig 2006). The technological world, we have become accustomed to, although perhaps not quite new, needs to carefully assess the discontinuity that it constantly produces and evaluate its global effects and short time spans of influence (Friedman 2005).

It turns out that all the communication potential of the Internet and, as per the experiences of the pioneer Edward L. Ayers in *The Valley of the Shadow*<sup>2</sup>, there were a series of historical activities that saw an increasingly strong participation of the audience. If we take into account a more recent experiment of great significance, in *The September 11 Digital Archive* on the attack on the Twin Towers<sup>3</sup>, we see that the examples (1993-2002) are a tangible sign of the rapid changes in the digital history, its branches and transformation (in some cases) in public

<sup>1</sup> <<https://ncph.org>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>2</sup> *The Valley of the Shadow. Two Communities in the American Civil War. 1993-2007.* <<http://valley.lib.virginia.edu>>. New website, as part of New American History: <<https://valley.newamericanhistory.org>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>3</sup> *The September 11 Digital Archive. 2002-23.* Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media and American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning, <<https://911digitalarchive.org>> (2023-09-30).

history. The birth of an international federation (IFPH, International Federation for Public History<sup>4</sup>), in 2010, dedicated to this approach allows us to fully grasp the moment of change that historical research is experiencing: This happens when historical research is combined with evidence, when the historian agrees not to play the role of the disseminator of academic knowledge, but a facilitator of historical memory; when the story is spun into a web, greatly emphasizing aspects of communication and openness to various non-specialist public entities, to be the chief interlocutors of references and historical works (Noiret 2018; Noiret, Tebeau, and Zaagsma 2022).

This type of approach, therefore, involves major consequences on the organisation of research, which can no longer be conducted only by a specialist. The abandonment of the individualistic model is in itself a kind of genetic mutation of historical research because it involves both a continuous exchange of ideas with other colleagues and the need to deal with subject areas far removed from those traditionally combined with history, like archival science.

Secondly, consider that the transformation of communication patterns in the digital environment has spawned web sites with historical content, which are not run by academics, and that public history, in fact, is generated primarily by the desire of the public to participate in the writing, documentation and discussion on the past. Professional historians, especially in Europe, often complain that online records offer an easy platform to deliver criticism: there are cases of publications that contain blunders, mistakes, lack of documentation and so on. Technological progress has definitively broken the stereotypes of traditional filtering of requests and selection of specific products. Each user can now become a publisher and this implies an enormous increase in historical content in digital form. However, despite many fears and doubts, the results of this increased (or simply passionate) participation of general public in public communication have been more positive than expected and have also attracted professional historians in giving rise to a new generation of historical content. It was discovered, for example, that Wikipedia, perhaps the best known and most widespread form of knowledge sharing among non-specialists, contained errors and inaccuracies in a volume similar to that of emblazoned printed works (Goodwin 2009; Nyirubugara 2011; Rosenzweig 2006). In terms of factual information (dates of birth and death, composition of governments, leaders in battle, etc.) one may even notice its high reliability: if its organisation of working is on a very questionable theoretical (and methodological) level, from a pragmatic point of view, the situation stands different and the diverse communities which are involved here have achieved very positive results.

From another point of view, it can be argued that getting in touch with the company cannot be considered a priority in some areas of academic knowledge, but in case of education, things are different. Those who do research in the edu-

<sup>4</sup> <<https://ifph.hypotheses.org>> (2023-09-30).



cational methodology, following the traditional approach, have always paid a lot of attention to the wider audience of education professionals: teachers and professors (and recently also the families) who have been privileged partners of educational research and, above all, education for a long time. Public history from this point of view is an effective way of maintaining this link with the educational reality and accepting the challenge of confrontation and cooperation: supporting the social utility of historical research, for example in a training exercise of education and medical professions, designed to increase awareness of the work and its meaning.

Finally, you can see that this way of recording history is entirely consistent with the purposes of the recent Open Access Movement, which was started with the desire to differentiate culture from economic perspective without barriers or obstacles of any kind (Budapest Open Access Initiative 2002; Russell 2014; Simcoe 2006; Suber 2012; Yiotis 2013). The movement, which has been joined by many Italian and European universities, has its roots, in alternative technological models of the sixties and seventies: the counter-culture, which expressed the idea that the software revolution was for the common good, something to which everyone could contribute and access, following the logic of freedom and not of profit. By applying this model of sharing the academic knowledge, the Open Access Movement supports the need to leave circuits that make editorial publications difficult, and very limited, due to expensive access to content. The possibility of dissemination, today being offered to everyone on the network, is emphasised and has become a model for effectively bringing together the world of academic research in the educational contexts.

### 3. Digital Public History and Educational Memories

The digital public history approach is particularly suited to the study of educational memories. The time is ripe, in my opinion, for this meeting, which appears imminent from many points of view, and must not be delayed. The recent historical reflection on the educational memory, in its different and still uneven meanings, has a lowest common denominator, which precisely consists of the link between academic research and life context.

Educational memories are the heritage of a particular community and research can only take into account the exchange ratio between researchers and witnesses (Erll and Nünning 2008; Gardner 2003; Gardner and Cunningham 1997). A pact of cooperation is established that is placed right in the direction of public history and its best implementation. Above all, it can make one of the cardinal principles of oral history and any research real and effective that entails the involvement of the so-called 'recollection of memories'. The testimony is not offered to the researcher to be put in a drawer or published in a prestigious albeit inaccessible magazine. Rather, the memory recollection meeting between researcher and witness is a valuable asset to be redelivered to the community because it enriches the knowledge of the past, its awareness and common reflection.

Public history is therefore supposed to help contextualise the micro-memoirs, to connect them to the dynamics of the society, its tensions and conflicts, to grasp the relationship between the local and the global perspective, to promote dialogue between the parties using the digital environment. A cultural mediation activity, which involves some important ethical issues, is particularly evident in educational matters. Between mental labour and social practices a lasting bond is thus established due to its online presence and is a great way to give back the memory: not just for once and permanently in the form of a paper publication, but in a form that allows you to continue to renew interpretations and testimonials over time by soliciting new ideas and new contributions. The intellectual work 'about and with' the memories can turn into, as per Freud, a sort of «terminable and interminable analysis», always open to further possible meanings.

Certainly, the construction of a research model inspired by public history is not simple and cannot happen without a gradation of experiences and reflections. It primarily consists of the abandonment of an ancient and rooted academic writing and research model, where an intellectual writes for his peers, in a network where everyone is a professional writer and reader. Switching to a model of public communication, does not necessarily imply complete abandonment of the previous model, though it can give a sense of betrayal of the fundamental mission of the historian, in favour of fulfilling a commitment to a diverse and varied audience, which do not share the same skills and knowledge as the researcher.

Secondly, it must be considered that the digital public history includes within it, as we already mentioned, many experiences and research practices, some of which are far from the usual skill set of a historian: primarily, the use of digital communication, generation and interpretation of oral sources, public involvement in the construction of historical knowledge and the connection with the logic of the Open Access Movement. All this makes it very difficult to start research in this new direction if there are no (or very limited) experiences and studies in these areas. To get an idea of the current situation in Italy, we can refer to the *Archivio Diaristico Nazionale* of Pieve Santo Stefano, which, since 1984, have been one of the most interesting and pioneering sources in this field with relevant of educational and academic aspects.

Well, despite the strong focus on the memory of the subjects and the emphasis of their role, the prospect of a digital form of more than 7.000 public diaries is still in its initial stages. The original objective, pursued with perseverance, is that of preservation in the library and in the publication of the winners of the annual Pieve award.

Note that this is a particularly relevant experience and highly representative of the 'state of the art' research, even educational, historical and academic: the given example leads us to understand that the elements already identified as essential parts of the public history are present in Italian historiography, albeit separately and not as part of a whole. For this reason, I think it is still very useful to refer to some international models to derive the source of study and reflection: consider, for example, a large collection of memories and images of

Second World War that the BBC has acquired during the 2003-6 period; an experience that demonstrates, among other things, the difficulty in managing this type of approach and the need for a large team of experts<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4. Memories of Teachers in Video: A Case Study (and a Proposal)

In the absence of specific Italian public history experiences in education, I think it necessary to propose a path towards this approach that takes account of its basic needs even though it is, in fact, emerging as an explorative and experimental approach. The first difficulty encountered is the requirement to learn a series of basic skills in the digital field that are necessary but that test history and its traditional liberal arts education. It is helpful, then, to appeal to the (few) experiences in education and approach scientific communities that have made many efforts in this direction and which may provide a forum for discussion and debate (think of the studies of researchers which led to the birth of the Association for Digital Humanities and Cultural Heritage<sup>6</sup>). The second obstacle is represented by the need for funding to organise a project that involves many people.

Considering these problems, I tried to demarcate a path towards public history armed with the knowledge that one must start with simple but meaningful experiences, capable of offering a clear perception of what could become a research project. The case study that I present is, simultaneously, a field test of digital history and a core group of public history: the latter contains, in particular, the participatory willingness and desire to provide social benefit of their work. A proposal, which, in essence, is open to future collaborations and developments.

The starting point of this experience was the commitment to teaching. The needs of university teaching were confronted with the need to renovate teaching and, as we shall see in a moment, researching. I found a big gap, unbridgeable, between educational memories of students, future teachers of primary schools, and academic memories that, at least in small part, could be extracted from university textbooks and incorporated into school history literature (Whitman 2004). I set myself the goal, then, to create a study that displayed the usefulness of memories for the training of trainers, for the awareness of their role and the basic characteristics (often implicit) of their profession; a goal that could actually apply to all education professions and, in a broader sense, medical professions (as in the case of nursing).

Unfortunately, ideological and political uses, which have enslaved the history, have obscured, particularly in school curricula, its contribution to the formation of critical thinking. Following a setting that is more obvious elsewhere (think of medical humanities in the United States), I organised a collection of

<sup>5</sup> WW2 People's War. An archive of World War Two memories, written by the public, gathered by the BBC. 2003-6. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>6</sup> Associazione per l'informatica umanistica e la cultura digitale. 2011-23. <<http://www.aiucd.it>> (2023-09-30).

testimonies that favoured the clear perception of historical, social and cultural history in the current teaching profession. The intent was to counter the supposed ‘naturalness’ of educational practices: a concept that is generally a part of the ‘popular’ pedagogy of teachers (Bruner 1996), but does not take into account the short and long-term trends along with the internal and external pressures that are exerted on the teacher’s role, which are so often implicit.

After a thorough training period, I have many students involved in the search for memories of school teachers and retired teachers, trying to outline the history of elementary teachers from sixties to today. The research proposal has been met with a lot of participation and the interviewers felt strongly involved in this form of collective documentation. This approach made it possible to get out of the political channels to try to get into the ‘black box’ of the school, recording the history of the experiences related to the school and school culture. As per the logic of digital public history, more than 400 interviews (almost all conducted in Tuscany) have not been transcribed or preserved in solitary units, but uploaded to YouTube by each interviewer (Bandini and Mangiatordi 2020). A specific channel has combined these interviews and organised them into *playlists*<sup>7</sup>. Thereafter the website *School Memories* was created to provide an adequate understanding of the project and ensure better use of video<sup>8</sup>.

Some evidence drawn from the numerous testimonies allows us to appreciate the validity of the approach and to be able to predict a series of research developments.

The first result of this special investigation is the general meaning to be drawn from viewing more than 180 hours of video interviews. The memories of the teaching profession are precise, vivid and detailed: they describe aspects considered most interesting and work perceived as more important over at least three decades. Taken together, because they are the result of daily occurrences in school life, these memories are a strong antidote to institutional and educational rhetoric (including the uninterrupted rich history of schools until date). In the foreground of the testimony, in fact, are very less rhetorical and very real aspects, which do not disrupt ‘the mission’ of the teacher, but emphasise one aspect: the effort. The effort put into going to school, often many kilometres away from home and difficult to reach: the experience of schools in the mountains never fails to point out the ice on the roads and walks in the snow, when the venue was only reachable on foot. The effort put into sitting in the classroom all morning heated just by a stove that often had to be fed at the expense of the teacher. The effort it took to be the female teachers, looking for a difficult reconciliation of the two roles in a social context, not very suitable to combining the demands of work with those of childcare.

<sup>7</sup> Gianfranco Bandini channel on YouTube. 2014-23. <<https://www.youtube.com/user/profbandini>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>8</sup> Bandini. 2018-23. *Memorie di Scuola*. <<http://www.memoriesdiscuola.it>> (2023-09-30).

In short, the material, family and environmental difficulties leap into the foreground well before those teaching stories and these anecdotes, in fact, are the sign of a school in the country that shared the hard and tiring life of the peasants. It highlights the difficulty of teaching in multiple classes, but especially the after school difficulties (especially those of patronage) (Sdei 2014) for paltry sums along with a sort of compulsory internship to earn marks. The fatigue of the recruitment process and the long-term job insecurity require constant attention in terms of the bureaucracy of supplying temporary replacements and participation in competitions (even five, six to be able to attain 'ordinary status') (Del Seppia 2014).

When one gets to the heart of memory, emotional aspects also come to the fore, which are related so less in the school history that they are often unjustly forgotten. In fact, emotional and relational aspects are the centre of all educational activities. School climate, defined as an emotional sense of belonging to a community, is the biggest factor in emotional and cognitive development (Adelman and Taylor 2005; Hattie 2009).

There are teachers who retire ahead of time so as not to leave the class in half or not lead from first to fifth; others who remember bring moved by the children that committed suicide or had bad experiences as adults (Puma 2014). Rather educational and personal relationships (though not without difficulties and misunderstandings) emerge through teachings, which tend to stay with the children. Unexpectedly, along with adult memories, some childhood memories also appear, school experienced as pupils: the sticks on the hands and other disciplinary modes, which we now call 'classroom management'. A series of behaviours suffered by the child who decided to become a teacher so that other children should not suffer what they had suffered, «to redeem those years of suffering» (Pace 2014). In other cases, the memory of their childhood at school refers to psychological violence, which is as strong as physical violence: «My teacher always said 'You have copied' and all the other children used to laugh» (Costagli 2014a, 2014b).

A part of the testimonies indicate the most important formative moments, those which led to a breakthrough in the way of working with children: there are those who remember the encounter with the CIDI (Centro di Iniziativa Democratica degli Insegnanti [Teacher Centre for Democratic Initiatives]; Trallori 2014), others with the MCE (Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa [Cooperative Education Movement]; Silvioni 2014) and individuals such as Ciari, Rodari, Preti, Agosti. Many memories recall the 70s and the reformism (not only institutional) that characterised them. The reviews are very interesting and not always favourable of the youth protest movements and the university, often seen as unrealistic and distant from reality (Moriggi 2014; Manetti 2014; Palladino 2014).

It is very interesting to note the presence of some constant elements, some real common denominators of the experiences recounted.

It is worth considering that the school as evidenced by the testimonies always placed great emphasis on marginalised and distressed children by trying in every

way to involve them in educational activities of the class. In parallel, however, there are no traces of care for children who present ‘high cognitive potential’.

A second aspect is the very obvious and constant attention given to the teaching and research methodologies appropriate to enhance learning: the research that is mediated by the school (for example through training courses) or teaching associations. Rarely, however, do teachers appear to be able to connect themselves to the scientific debate (Malvolti 2014; Biondi 2014).

A third aspect, perhaps the most distinctive and rooted in the collective recollection, was the passion for innovation-experimenting with new forms of teaching. A belief in innovation, which is linked to the positive desire to improve the lives of the class, but at the same time, does not have to be subjected to special tests unless it is contrary to the judgement of those who have experienced changes. This procedure for subsequent innovations is very reminiscent of ‘the experimental groping’ of Célestin Freinet and, although its original setting has been mixed indistinguishably with many others, it resurfaces easily in the testimonies, strongly marking the educational choices of teachers.

All these aspects are very important and can suggest some interesting lines of interpretation. I hope that this will be verified with more in-depth research, but as of now, it shows the richness of the stories of school life and can make people understand the value of such a digital public history approach in order to promote real cultural exchange between the past and the present academic and the school community<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> My work on school memories has continued as part of the *Italian Research Program of Great National Interest* (PRIN) in collaboration with colleagues from the University of Florence, University of Macerata, University of Roma Tre, and the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. The project, directed by principal investigator Roberto Sani from the University of Macerata, aims to investigate the interaction between social perceptions and collective representations of school experiences in Italy from 1861 to 2001. This objective will be achieved through the analysis of various primary sources, such as autobiographical texts, diaries, and oral histories, in addition to secondary literature. The research will utilise a range of theoretical perspectives, including cultural history and memory studies, and will aim to shed new light on the relationship between individual and collective memory. The resulting insights will have significant implications for understanding the formation and transformation of collective identities in Italy (see: *School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001)*. <<https://www.memoriascolastica.it>>; Sani and Meda 2023).



## Public History Is a Bridge between Academic Research, Education and Social Memory\*

### 1. Historical Research and the Educational Needs of Society

Historical research during the twentieth century has had a vast and diverse development. New and important questions have been asked in the past that have given rise to the history of women, childhood, emotions, the everyday ... From a methodological point of view, there has been a marked expansion of the sources that can be used and a lively debate, still ongoing, on how to catalogue, analyse and interpret them. The emergence of quantitative history, specifically, has generated a positive interest in numerical issues and their treatment; it has led to a genre of 'history with computers' that has rapidly developed into today's digital history.

Within the space of a few years, the epochal changes in technology, within a broad and global modification of society, have offered new opportunities for research and simultaneously revolutionised modes of communication (Salvatori 2017a; Noiret 2011b). It is from the latter that we must start in order to emphasise the importance of a digital environment that, for the first time in history, allows anyone to communicate at any time. The much-criticised inflation of incorrect, inaccurate and misleading news that is rife on the Net actually provides us with the exact measure of the change that is taking place and progressively accelerating: global and with no chance of returning to paper-

\* The first version of this chapter was published as Bandini 2019c. The present chapter is an updated version of that work.



only and elitist communication circuits. The ongoing disintermediation, between the centres of production of scientific knowledge and the public, is a fact that academic research cannot ignore. In particular, this closely concerns historical knowledge, which has experienced (and is still experiencing) a progressive double decline (Guldi and Armitage 2014): both of its social consideration as a tool for the ethical and social formation of the new generations (Diorio 1985), and of its usefulness as a training tool for certain specific professions, first and foremost the educational ones (Christou 2009).

The disconnect between university knowledge and society was keenly felt by George Wesley Johnson, one of the most important figures in the initiation and development of public history: as early as the 1980s, he denounced the state of crisis of history taught in universities and the need for change. Public history was proposed as a strong and articulate answer to the gap between social needs and academic research. At the centre of the reflection was to be 'the notion of historian as professional' that would commit historians to a long path of change, following in the footsteps of that already traced by economists and psychologists who had established strong links with the social context:

In fact, most history students, whether bachelor's, master's, or even doctoral candidates, are rarely exposed to the concept of professionalism per se (leaving aside its connections with history), yet it has increasingly become a major force in modern society. It is our contention that growing economic opportunities for persons trained in history to work outside the university have also created the need for a new kind of instruction in the history program; the study of professionalism (Johnson 1987, 99).

From this point of view, the field of educational professions (teachers, educators, assistants, etc.) can be considered an exemplary case, certainly one of the most interesting, for verifying this challenging statement that still prompts reflection and raises questions today.

Firstly, it should be made clear that educational professions represent a wide range of work activities, all of which have the constant presence of a caring relationship, usually between adults and children. The asymmetry of the educational relationship is consequently a constant feature of these activities, which often also present a strong age difference between the provider and the recipient of care.

Despite many local diversifications, and many educational traditions in the various nations, the common elements prevailed and fostered the growth of an international dimension in educational research, especially since the period between the two world wars.

Among the elements common to the various national regulations, it is interesting to note the presence of the discipline of history, in this case the history of education or schooling, which has long been part of the training courses for the profession, as a compulsory and foundational subject. The inclusion of history in the school curriculum has been an exception (in comparison to other professions such as medicine or engineering), primarily linked to the emergence of university training for jobs that were previously carried out with lower degrees

(e.g. teaching in primary schools). On the other hand, it should be recalled that history made its appearance in education when it was still very much linked to general pedagogy and the philosophy of education and merely represented its diachronic explication. Over time, and to an increasingly greater extent, the presence of historical-educational culture has been reduced in favour of vocationalising subjects: this fact has presented historians with the need to justify their presence in the curriculum and, perhaps, as I argue here, to change their approach to the discipline, taking due account of doubts about its usefulness (Bandini 2019b).

Educational historians only recently seem to have realised the problematic situation of the relationship between history and society. The emphasis placed on the concept of 'school culture' (Julia 1995; Nóvoa 2003), for instance, can be read as an attempt to give back a role and a voice to the experience of the subjects (in this case teachers and students) within official, political, normative and institutional historical reconstructions. More recently, and with greater awareness of the relationship between historians and society, it was António Nóvoa who emphasised the importance of Public history in education to put the role of the discipline on a new footing, especially in times of reforming school systems<sup>1</sup>.

Reflecting on these directions of change, starting with Johnson's pioneering work outline, I believe there is a need to start again from the very notion of professionalism and there is a need to do so 'actively and retrospectively'. Linking the teaching of history to the professional role people will play (or are playing) «will guarantee that students will gain insight into the nature of professionalism and the similarity of the problems that all professions face» (Johnson 1987, 110).

The link between past and present, although not always felt, marks many elements of everyday professional life. Although we may not realise it, history lives with us, in many different forms. It is the task of history education to make this link understood and to highlight aspects of discontinuity or disruption that we are often completely unaware of. Although far from easy or intuitive, this operation puts historians in touch with education professionals, provided it is anchored in today's issues, in the challenges that the world of work increasingly poses.

If we look carefully at the world of educational (and educational-historical) research, we realise two extremely significant aspects. Firstly, the field of study has always been a crossroads of several disciplinary areas and many interconnected themes. On the other hand, particularly in the field of didactics and special pedagogy, there is no doubt that many activities have been carried out in the field, following the paradigm of participatory action research (Betti 2019; more generally see: Noiret 2011c): this research method, which has some points of contact with public history, has been the privileged motive for the pedagogical

<sup>1</sup> Nóvoa (2009). But see also McCulloch (2000) and, in the same volume, Robinson (2000). While working in the field of oral history, English historians have demonstrated this desire for a relationship between the academic discipline and the world of school experience; see, for example, Cunningham and Gardner (2004).

field to come into contact with the territory, to build a relationship of collaboration and training especially with schools and local authorities.

This is a very important antecedent, marked by a typical pedagogical intentionality (Cambi 2004), because it contains, in essence, the basic elements for the construction of a new and fruitful relationship between academia and society. In a nutshell, the underlying reasons for the proposal described in this volume.

## 2. The Unique Features of the Historical-educational Field

The history of education, like all educational studies, is a borderline history that lies at the intersection of sociology, anthropology, psychology and pedagogy. In fact, the list could be much longer because historians of art, geography, architecture, natural sciences, for example, have also sometimes dealt with educational issues. If we look at international literature, we realise that the questions addressed by historians of schools, childhood or the family may have answers that come from contemporary historians, medievalists, sociologists, as well as from a range of disciplines that do not always correspond to the classical configuration of the discipline, especially the Italian one. One example of this is the study of children's literature, which shows striking differences between the Italian academic framework and that prevailing in Europe.

From this point of view, the historical-educational field is certainly problematic, but at the same time rich in stimuli and research perspectives because it is typically transdisciplinary. Depending on academic traditions, there are specialists who have different backgrounds and do not always belong to the same research communities, nor do they publish in the same journals: this characteristic is absolutely unavoidable because it is rooted in the very definition of the history of education. An important correlation of this research landscape is the fact that those involved in education often have an ongoing relationship with their object of study, be it schools, museums, archives or libraries.

The importance of the contribution of historical knowledge to education, of course and naturally, appears very clear in the eyes of historical scholars; but in reality, many other specialists – in didactics, special pedagogy, family psychology, educational technology and so on – also make frequent use of historical concepts and notions: a good number of articles begin with considerations of this kind, which usually provide a brief historical background, an introduction to entirely topical issues. It is a kind of hidden history, peripheral, on the fringe of the argument, but nevertheless hugely significant because it testifies to a cultural interest and reason. Consider, for example, the studies on the problems of today's adolescents or families and the typical comparison with a situation in the past: 'the disappearance of childhood', 'the long adolescence', the death or 'decline of the family', etc. Admittedly, these are often initial and brief considerations, playing on the synthetic (and misleading) difference yesterday-today, but nevertheless a tangible sign of the impossibility of doing without some form of historical knowledge and awareness of the link with the past.

While all this is verifiable within academic culture, inside which historians do not struggle to find relationships with other disciplines, this awareness, already well outlined long ago by Émile Durkheim (Borlandi 2017), does not easily result in a collective, social mentality that attributes this important role and significance to history. Unfortunately, the history taught at school has proven to be tied to political and ideological logics that have marked it strongly in the collective imagination (Bandini 2019a). Consider the difficulty of Republican Italy in not only getting rid of fascist culture in school books, but also in managing to develop historical culture in a democratic and international direction.

Therefore, if a certain type of history has only been a formative obligation and has become a burden to be disposed of, what type of history do we need? In the educational professions, all of which are characterised by the daily relationship with the other, I believe that we can benefit greatly from an expertise that begins in the past, which helps to rediscover links and differences with the past (Linné 2001; Vinovskis 2015). A similar discourse could be made with the broader set of helping professions, particularly in the health sector.

The public history paradigm lends itself well, and better than any other historical paradigm, to be used with specialised audiences, such as those made up of educators, teachers and school leaders (Bandini 2017; Depaepe 2001; Goodman and Grosvenor 2009). In fact, it is possible to build pathways to understanding the hidden dimensions of the profession (Massa and Cerioli 1999): acquiring an awareness of one's role in the past therefore means identifying the characteristics that are still active and in motion, although not always evident. At the same time, it means realising that processes are always in progress as they can lead to outcomes that are not taken for granted, even completely different from those desired. The perception of the dynamism of one's professional role, and of the innumerable pressures to which one is subjected, is a fundamental acquisition because it allows us to break out of the erroneous perception of the 'naturalness' of our behaviour: assigning grades, keeping children sitting at a desk for four hours, writing on the blackboard, assigning homework for the holidays, punishing or rewarding, having a prayer or a national anthem recited, all this is the result of a long socio-historical elaboration where nothing is the result of chance or nature.

Psychoanalysts articulate this concept well when they highlight behaviour in which instead of 'acting' we are in fact 'acted upon' by our personal past. Uncovering the field of forces (in the sense of pressures, resistances, habits) that constitutes the current work of the teaching profession means realising the social (and historical) construction of our behaviour; historical knowledge, in this sense, helps us a great deal not to consider certain behaviours as 'natural' or even 'normal', simply because they have accompanied us since birth. It is a path of anthropological discovery that leads to the recognition of their 'non-naturalness': it enables a cultural acquisition of primary importance because it allows us to leave the reference system in which we have lived, to estrange ourselves from the collective mentality experienced in the family and school environment, to see ourselves from the outside. In a word, it helps us get rid of the prejudices

and summary classifications into which we frame reality, fortified by tradition and custom (for a thorough and wide-ranging examination, sensitive to historical issues, see Mead 2019).

All this has a particular and very interesting significance for educational history because it, more than other areas, is marked by medium-long and even very long-lasting phenomena, richer in permanence than in discontinuity. It is primarily the twentieth century that turns all the cards upside down and with increasing force presents us with a series of fractures from even the very recent past, in the history of education and particularly in that of childhood and the family.

### 3. *Public History of Education Manifesto: Building a Shared Educational Pathway*

The above considerations do not lead to an astute vindication of the value of the history of education (or of history in general), nor do they emphasise how academics in the humanities are misunderstood in contemporary society. Rather, it aims to create conditions in which a dialogue and collaboration can develop between history and society (Ridolfi 2017) or, in our specific case, between the history of education and the educational professions. Past experiences can help us a lot in this project, in particular those of *participatory action research* (as mentioned above) and the management of teacher training-oriented courses of study, which were the occasion for a multitude of meetings and joint work. On the basis of this past of beneficial relations, even if not continuous and numerically limited, it is possible to write together a charter of intent that has public history as its point of reference. The writing, however, must respect the typical approach of the public historian, i.e. be open, communal, shared. That is why I will only outline the sharing process and some basic ideas here, but I will present a draft of the text, which must be the outcome of working side by side. Only this process, however long, will allow it to be implemented with all the requirements of the parties involved.

I would therefore like to recall (and sincerely thank) all the institutes, bodies and associations that participated in the *Public History of Education 1st National Meeting Conference: reflections, testimonies, experiences* (Florence, 5-6 November 2018), which was the initial and founding moment of a common path, together with other subjects that have gradually joined this process of cultural elaboration. Thanks to the support and patronage of the Italian Association of Public History and its president, Serge Noiret, the school world was firstly involved, represented by the School Office of the Region of Tuscany and the institutes: Corezzo Primary School (Arezzo); M. Amici Primary School (Campiglia Marittima), Vittorio Veneto Primary School (Florence), First Level Secondary School (Carducci, Florence); Gianni Rodari Secondary School (Scandicci, Florence), Razzauti Primary School (Livorno), Tesei-Micali Secondary School (Livorno), P. Vannucci Primary School (Suvereto), L.A. Muratori Secondary School (Suvereto), A. Altobelli Primary School (Venturina Terme), G. Marconi Primary School (Venturina Terme), G. Carducci Secondary School (Venturina Terme), San Lino Primary School (Volterra).

Special thanks must be extended to: FORLILPSI, Department of Education, Languages, Interculture, Literatures and Psychology of the University of Florence; AISO, Italian Association of Oral History; CIRSE, Italian Centre for Historical Educational Research; INDIRE, National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research; LUA, Free University of Autobiography (Anghiari); SHCY, Society for the History of Children and Youth; SINPIA, Italian Society of Childhood and Adolescent Neuropsychiatry; SIPED, Italian Society of Pedagogy; SIPSE, Italian Society for the Study of Historical-Educational Heritage; SISF, Italian Society for the Study of Photography; Order of Social Assistants of Tuscany; Order of Journalists of Tuscany; Order of Psychologists of Tuscany.

It is not, as is now clear, a question of listing all the issues that the history of education has dealt with in the course of its development (especially since the 1980s) in order to make a version adapted for an audience of education professionals. Quite the opposite. Instead, it is about listening to the training needs that emerge from the daily lives of education professionals, whether teachers, educators or school leaders. As an example (but based on some experiences already made) one can therefore attempt to use a historical approach to answer, together with educational professionals, some very important questions, which are given below:

- *the assessment of pupils.* Is it even necessary to assess students? Is it necessary to do so from an early age or is it more useful to do so from pre-adolescence? Is timely and frequent assessment preferable? Is it useful to provide grounds for the assessments? What happens if no assessments are ever carried out in a primary school class?
- *the adult-child relationship.* Is a cold and detached relationship with students preferable or a warm and emotional one? What are the effects of the two different educational styles? Which teaching style is most effective for classroom discipline? Can physical punishment be used against children? Why is it legal in some nations to beat children both at home and at school?
- *the textbooks.* Is the use of textbooks always beneficial? What happens if we don't use them at all? Is it possible to produce textbooks independently, together with the students?
- *the active teaching methods.* Is face-to-face teaching always effective? Do teaching methods based on student activity together with others always give good results? How can we evaluate the work done in groups?
- *the new technologies.* Is an understanding of computer logic important? Or is it preferable to focus on application possibilities? Is it useful to teach programming languages? At what age? Is digital learning better than learning by traditional methods?
- *the multicultural classroom.* What are the effects of assimilationist education? Is the maintenance of bilingualism useful for immigrant children? Which parts of the historical and geographical teaching programmes can be revised? Can school culture help deconstruct ethnic prejudices and social stigma against minorities?

- *the multi-faith classes*. In order to educate students in mutual respect, is it useful to avoid certain issues that tend to conflict and leave them to the care of the family? Or promote a dialogue on any topic of interest to the class? Should children be considered believers according to the faith of the family or should they not be labelled given their young age? Is it useful to explain food choices based on religious requirements? And how?

These training paths, indicated above as an example, can very usefully be placed within the framework of an interesting and positive diversification of public history (Bertuccelli 2017; Cauvin 2016, 2018; Noiret 2017) that we have been witnessing in recent years, where the revival of interest and activity around the educational professions can certainly have a prominent place.

#### 4. Eight Points of Attention

There are some aspects of the project outlined above which are particularly important and which it is useful to point out in some detail.

1) Public history is a great resource that belongs not only to historians, but to all those who, whether a specialist or not, starting from their specific cultural competences, wish to adopt its dialogical style, social engagement and methodologies.

History is an instrument of intellectual knowledge that cannot be reserved only for a group of specialists. This does not mean pitting the world of experience against the world of academic research, but emphasising the need for an encounter, a cultural relationship that allows historical knowledge to be valorised, while maintaining high standards of research quality in communicative and dialogic contexts open to a wide audience, or specific audiences.

2) Public history, as understood in this way, moves from social needs and tries to provide ways of co-constructing knowledge, moving away from the usual idea of divulgation, dissemination, transmission.

If historians listen to one another and if the process is driven by specific social needs, it is not a matter of inventing ways of disseminating or making a spectacle of historical content: instead, it is a matter of breaking out of the transmissive model and having historians work with stakeholders to initiate an exercise in critical thinking, to build knowledge, reflection and awareness together.

3) In the field of education and helping professions, public history constitutes an approach that allows one to:

- emphasise the relationship between the university and the territory, starting from the best practices implemented so far, even if not named as public history;
- raise awareness of the long cultural and social construction of current attitudes and behaviour that have deep, multi-generational roots (as in the case of adult-child relationships);
- provide tools for critical understanding of society, useful for modifying and improving professional activities, in particular by directing relations to the best interests of the child.

In the field of educational (and helping) professions, it is possible to make a specific contribution to the acquisition of fundamental skills to improve professional activities, to work in the direction of the best interests of children, a key concept in contemporary child culture<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, historical knowledge is not an intellectual embellishment (which only certain social classes can afford, after all), but something concretely useful, which serves to make informed choices.

4) Public history of education activities have a natural affinity with didactics and the school world: they can effectively contribute to both enhancing learning and generating cultural change in the surrounding area.

Educational activities, particularly those aimed at the study of history and geography, have a privileged relationship with the territory that can be emphasised precisely by a public history approach. By going beyond the confines of the classroom, education can aspire not only to improve learning, of course, but also to promote changes in the surrounding area. Education for legality is, in this sense, a particular way of implementing citizen science.

5) Public history in the educational and helping professions can be used as a powerful tool for training, both in the initial phase and in in-service training. Reflexivity is an important competence of teacher education and can be greatly enriched by historical awareness. Following the path indicated by Donald A. Schön, we can argue the usefulness of the historical approach to foster the exercise and care of reflexivity (Schön 2013; Conrad 2006).

For example, the importance of a positive and joyful relationship with children, contrary to what is generally thought, is not a natural fact, but a sophisticated social goal. Analysing it in this way allows for a full assessment of its potential for use, improvement, change (Stearns 2012 and 2019).

6) Public history activities will favour direct contact and the involvement of interested persons, but at the same time develop digital communication and interaction technologies under the banner of glocalism and social empowerment. From a technological point of view, this means choosing Open Source software and Open Access communication policies.

In recent years, technological changes have ushered us into a new and different 'historical era', whose contours, characteristics and impact on society we struggle to delineate. Choosing an open mode of digital communication means realising highly important public history spaces, starting with simply making historical sources available (Cohen and Rosensweig 2006; Danniau 2013; Noiret 2018). If culture is a primary asset of mankind, just like water and air, then the digital environment must be understood as an indispensable platform for the exchange of knowledge and relations between subjects<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Article 3, Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 20 November 1989, ratified by Italy in 1991 (Law 176 of 27 May 1991, Ratification and Execution of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

<sup>3</sup> See the perspective of Ostrom, Nobel Prize winner for Economics in 2009: Hess and Ostrom 2007.



7) Schools, museums, archives, libraries and local authorities are the natural stakeholders of public history activities.

The world of education has long since established and often had important relationships with cultural institutions in the area. It is sufficient to refer to the links with the museum system, which has seen the creation of educational sections in museums dedicated exclusively to the educational relationship with the public, and in particular with schools. Institutions on the ground, together with the university and in an absolutely equal way, are the cultural infrastructure that is necessary for public history to develop and take root in the social fabric. The primary aim of the relationship with local communities, in participative and dialogue-based forms, is to enhance and promote the cultural heritage.

8) Historical research and education offer many opportunities and ways to build effective and engaging public history activities. Nevertheless, a privileged role, which must be particularly emphasised, is played by oral history practices, life stories, and autobiographical writings.

Historical knowledge deals with a very wide range of human experiences from individual history to the history of collectivities and world history. Placing emphasis on personal accounts (Demetrio 2007, 2012, 2022), albeit always in connection with broader cognitive frameworks, allows us to fully develop our reflexivity, to promote individual and community well-being (Benelli 2020; Benelli and Gijón Casares 2020), and to increase our ability to understand the present.

It follows from the above that the history of education can use the public history paradigm in an extremely convincing, effective and closely related way to its founding values. The proposal for a public history of education, in other words, constitutes the hope for an evolutionary path of the discipline that strongly links it to social contexts, enhancing its specialised knowledge in the face of the challenges, needs, and current distresses of the educational world.

## The *Public History of Education Manifesto*: A Conceptual and Operational Proposal Made by Italian Community

### 1. Historical Studies and the Field of Education

The field of studies and research that deals with educational issues has always been a crossroads of different disciplinary contributions, which from time to time have given rise to hybridisations or conflicts, have generated specialisations and new research paradigms. The studies of the history of education, within the pedagogical disciplines, have experienced a period of progressive departure from the philosophical approach that had characterised them for a long time, to arrive at a clear and defined historical identity only towards the end of the twentieth century, with some time lags between the different national and linguistic communities. Italian historians of education, in particular, can recognise this turning point in the establishment of their national academic association, in 1980, with the name of the *Italian Centre for Historical-Educational Research*<sup>1</sup>.

The centrality of the historical approach to the study of educational processes has thus given rise to a new season of studies that have become passionate about the many variations of education, in formal, informal and non-formal contexts. It was precisely this achieved disciplinary identity and the sharing of modes of study and approach to historical sources that enabled historians of education to

<sup>1</sup> Italian Centre for Historical-Educational Research (CIRSE, Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa), President Fulvio De Giorgi (Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia), <[www.cirse.it](http://www.cirse.it)> (2023-09-30). See Betti 2016.

be more present in the pedagogical debate, including the international debate, as we can see from the increasingly strong participation in the main trade association, the International Standing Conference for the History of Education<sup>2</sup>.

It is in this context that the increasingly widespread perception of the need for renewal of the themes and methodological approaches is placed. In essence, the idea that historians of education, born as professors formed in university courses of study dedicated to the professional training of teachers, should make a new and original contribution to the training of educators (Van Nieuwenhuysse, Simon, and Depaeppe 2015; Willinsky 2005). More generally, the idea begins to assert itself that history must be considered an intellectual tool to address the current problems of the educational professions (the teacher, the educator, the supporting teacher, etc.) and not only to provide a static representation of a distant past. This awareness of the usefulness of historical knowledge for a reflective and critical professionalism necessarily had to find different ways of teaching history, of offering it to specific audiences such as those of the educational professions, as well as those of the care professions (nurse, social worker, etc.) that have in common many aspects focused on the educational relationship and, often, on the asymmetry of roles between adults and minors.

It is in this precise intersection of historical and educational sensibilities that CIRSE registered as a participant institution of the Italian Association of Public History, established in 2016<sup>3</sup> with the support of the International Federation for Public History<sup>4</sup> and the Italian Central Board for Historical Studies<sup>5</sup>. The following year, the *Ravenna Conference* marked the operational start of the association that has since played, and continues to play, a great attractive role towards all those who, inside and outside the university, had begun to work in this direction<sup>6</sup>. Public history has been recognised as a historical paradigm, not only rich in great potential, but partially similar to many previous experiments that had been developed within social history, oral history, in general what is called ‘history from below’ (Betti 2021), with the intention of giving voice to marginal subjects and communities in the traditional history taught at university and in school, conveyed by the history textbooks.

<sup>2</sup> ISCHE, International Standing Conference for the History of Education, President Inés Dussel (The Center for Research and Advanced Studies, Mexico), <[www.ische.org](http://www.ische.org)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>3</sup> AIPH, Associazione Italiana di Public History, President Serge Noiret (European University Institute), <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>4</sup> IFPH, International Federation for Public History, President Tanya Evans (Centre for Applied History, Macquarie University), <<https://ifph.hypotheses.org>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>5</sup> GCSS, Giunta Centrale per gli Studi Storici, President Francesco Perfetti (Scuola normale superiore, Pisa), <[www.gcass.it](http://www.gcass.it)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. “Prima Conferenza dell’Associazione Italiana di Public History – AIPH. Università di Bologna, Campus di Ravenna 5-9 giugno 2017”, <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/33>> (2023-09-30).

It should also be remembered that on the occasion of the Regional Conference of Public History in Piedmont, held at the *Polo del '900* on 7 May 2018, the first version of the *Italian Public History Manifesto*<sup>7</sup> was presented and discussed publicly.

The idea of further engaging public history in educational issues was launched by Gianfranco Bandini in 2015, on the occasion of the international conference *School Memories, New Trends in Historical Research into Education: Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues* (Seville, 22-23 September, 2015; the conference was organised by the Spanish Society for the History of Education<sup>8</sup>). It was then highlighted that the perspective of public history had been put in second place in the broad and complex American tradition, rich in application strands with greater strength and diffusion (as in the museum field), and underestimated even in educational environments. However, by recognising the huge potential of public history, it could be used to give a fresh image to historical knowledge as an essential and fundamental tool for education (Bandini 2017).

## 2. The Origins of the *Public History of Education Manifesto* (2018)

In the wake of these initiatives, in 2018 Gianfranco Bandini and Stefano Oliviero, in collaboration with the Italian Association of Public History, organised a conference specifically dedicated to the field of education: the *Public History of Education 1st National Meeting: reflections, testimonies, experiences* (Florence, 5-6 November 2018; Bandini and Oliviero 2019).

Within this event, the project of a *Public History of Education Manifesto* (Bandini 2019c) was presented that, starting from the general one of the Italian Association of Public History, would provide clear indications for the educational field, in particular for the educational and helping professions. A concrete way to affirm that historical knowledge can have great value in all educational sectors, starting from school, and in particular in the initial and in-service training of education professionals<sup>9</sup>. All this not only within the teaching of history, as a sort of disciplinary enhancement or improvement of teaching, but offering the public history approach as a transversal tool, suitable to fit into many educational practices, even social mediation and social empowerment.

This is how the term *public history of education* was coined to delimit a specific field of operation, recognising certain particularities of the educational sector that require a specific in-depth study and the fundamental awareness of being able to count on a large community of practices, both national and international. In historiography, this specific term does not actually have relevant precedents,

<sup>7</sup> *Il Manifesto della Public History Italiana*. 2018, <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/3193>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>8</sup> SEDHE, Sociedad Española de Historia de la Educación, President María del Mar del Pozo Andrés (Universidad de Alcalá de Henares), <<https://sedhe.es>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>9</sup> One of the first documented experiences in Italy is described in the next chapter.

except for *public history education* which, although referring to the educational field, is focused on activities that educate around public history (or discuss it), but not regarding the activities of public history in educational contexts. One of the first uses of this terminology allows us to better understand the considerable distance between the two terms:

Public history education provides an excellent arena for an interdisciplinary approach that could study many essential and interesting concerns such as the history and degrees of success of record systems, the social and cultural utility of archives, the nature pulse of collecting, and the future role of the archivist in information technology (Cox 1986, 43).

Or, even more clearly:

To advocate that public history education should be experiential in nature means more than saying that students should actually do the various jobs done by public historians. That is certainly a part of most history programmes today, and it is a feature that I hope to further. However, true experiential education should not be merely pragmatic, but experimental and broadening (Karamanski 1987, 139; see also Mooney Melvin 1987).

This line of studies and experiences has thus kept alive the attention, up to the present day, to the need for an education in public history in various institutional places, starting with universities (Conard 2015; Weyeneth and Vivian 2016).

What I want to emphasise here is the importance of understanding the specific needs of the educational field and of working so that public history can not only be taught (forming new public historians), but can become a normal and not an exceptional way of discussing many problems that education professionals encounter, starting with teachers; in the same way, it can be considered a great instrument of cultural intermediation, in relation to education regarding heritage (tangible and intangible), the identity of territorial communities, and sustainability. A list that certainly only constitutes a few examples and is not exhaustive, to indicate briefly the great fields of action where the absence of historical knowledge, and therefore of awareness of the past, can lead to a dangerous situation of risk, as is well understood when we think, for example, of the recurrent waves of racism or sexism that continue to threaten social life.

If we consider public history as an umbrella term, a paradigm of a general nature, which allows us to develop many lines of action without betraying its founding characteristics or main objectives, we must recognise that in respect of the pluralistic and open character that has characterised it since the beginning, many specific application areas have arisen. Some are general in nature, e.g., *public history of slavery*, *public history of medicine*, *public history of women*, *public history of labour*, *public history of Africa*, *public history of science*, and *public history of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics/Medicine)*.

Others, however, are more specific, such as *public history of the Holocaust*, *public history of the black museum movement*, *public history of conflict in Northern Ireland*, *public history of cemeteries*, etc.

This situation, which has seen an increase in the number of sectors of interest and also the emergence of peculiar national characteristics (Noiret 2019), has necessitated a long period of identity assessment and research, as Marko Demantowsky rightly noted:

We may perhaps imagine this as an intellectual frontier, which, during a long pioneering period, invited and enticed explorations of this uncharted territory of knowledge and in which, in the movement phase, keeping the treks close together and protecting the early settlements was crucial (2018, 9).

A process that continues over time and feeds on the continuous and not always predictable interrelationships between a series of subjects, between institutions and communities, between theoretical conceptualisations and field experiences (Cauvin 2020). It is through this non-linear dynamic, not predominantly academic, but continually exposed to social tensions, that new ways of making public history find a space. In this sense, the growing interest in educational issues, starting with school issues, takes on the meaning of a contribution to the choral construction of a public history movement that wishes to connect historical research to the needs, requirements and current challenges of society. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Covid-19 pandemic has urged the collection of testimonies from the beginning and then the development of experiences of dialogue and reflection (Cabeleira and Madeira 2022; Martinelli and Oliviero 2021; Priem 2022):

collecting as many voices as possible means establishing collaborative processes with public audiences when preserving, curating, editing, and presenting history. Such collaboration involves negotiating and producing narratives of the past that connect archival sources with their communities and constitute meaning that may challenge archival classification systems and the work of historical experts (Priem and Grovesnor 2022, 187)<sup>10</sup>.

The global crisis, suddenly shifting all the work on sources into the digital context, has made it necessary for an immediate change of perspective to enable the issues in question to be addressed. At this point the role of public history appears clearer and leads to the emergence of different instances that in various ways had preceded this new and unitary awareness.

### 3. The Path of Public Sharing of the *Manifesto* and Recent Trends in Educational Historiography

After the Covid-19 pandemic, initiatives were resumed around the *Public History of Education Manifesto* that had been proposed at the 2018 conference, which was attended by academics and non-academics, institutions and individu-

<sup>10</sup> On the broader topic of digital public history, see Noiret, Tebeau, and Zaagsma 2022.

als, associations and bodies. This dialogue also continued during the pandemic, with meetings exclusively online, with schools, associations (in particular the Italian Association of Oral History<sup>11</sup> and with the Free University of Autobiography<sup>12</sup>) and anyone interested in discussing the proposal. A series of meetings was organised so that the document could be discussed and collectively written, also based on proposed amendments and additions.

Using a typical public history approach, the *Manifesto* was improved, until the working group was formalised during the annual assembly of the Italian Association of Public History on 29 June 2020, chaired by Serge Noiret, when the constitution of a working group on this specific topic was presented and approved<sup>13</sup>.

The *Public History of Education Manifesto* is therefore characterised not only by its specific formulation and dedicated to educational issues, but also because it aims to be the result of a process of shared construction and elaboration: a document that is always open to discussion and its improvement.

This process of sharing and discussion was supported by: CIRSE (Italian Centre for Historical-Educational Research), 'Athe Gracci' National Centre for Research and Autobiographical Studies, Department of Education, Languages, Intercultural Studies, Literatures and Psychology of the University of Florence, INDIRE (National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research), Ernesto de Martino Institute, LABCD (Interdepartmental Laboratory of Digital Culture, University of Pisa), Public History of Education Laboratory (University of Florence), LUA Free University of Autobiography, Anghiari).

<sup>11</sup> AISO, Associazione Italiana di Storia Orale, President Antonio Canovi (Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia), <[www.aisoitalia.org](http://www.aisoitalia.org)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>12</sup> LUA, Libera Università dell'Autobiografia, founded by Duccio Demetrio (now Director of the 'Athe Gracci' National Centre for Research and Autobiographical Studies), <<http://lua.it>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>13</sup> Currently they support the Manifesto and promote its use: 1) AIPH - *Working Group on the Public History of Education*: Gianfranco Bandini (University of Florence, coordinator), Stefano Bartolini (AISO, Italian Oral History Association), Caterina Benelli (University of Messina), Raffaella Biscioni (University of Bologna), Luca Bravi (University of Florence), Silvia Cantelli (University of Florence), Anna Cascone (Lasallian Library and Museum), Pietro Causarano (University of Florence), Monica Dati (University of Florence), Pietro Finelli (Domus Mazziniana), Pamela Giorgi (INDIRE), Stefano Oliviero (University of Florence), Enrica Salvatori (University of Pisa), Luca Salvini (Tuscan Schools Office), Aurora Savelli (University of Naples 'l'Orientale'), Luigi Tomassini (University of Bologna); 2) AIPH - *School Working Group*: Agostino Bistarelli (Liceo Montessori Roma, coordinator), Giovanna Bino (Lecce State Archives), Beatrice Borghi (University of Bologna), Paolo Ceccoli (Liceo classico Volta, Como), Anna Laysa Di Lernia (ITI Hensemberger, Monza), Rolando Dondarini (University of Bologna), Maurizio Gusso (IRIS president), Giuliana Iurlano (CESRAM President), Giancarlo Martina (IPSSCART Stringher, Udine), Manfredi Scanagatta (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Sara Troglia (University of Bologna); 3) INDIRE (National Institute of Documentation Innovation and Educational Research), *Research Structure 12 Enhancement of historical heritage*: Pamela Giorgi (coordinator), Alessandra Anichini, Francesca Caprino, Raimonda Morani, Francesca Pizzigoni, Irene Zoppi, Paolo Malevolti.

Private individuals, institutions and associations are invited to actively collaborate in the process of continuous elaboration and revision of the *Manifesto*, which is a proposal created to connect academic research, teaching and social memory in the field of education.

In this period of time, interesting reflections have developed on these issues, still isolated and not always explicit, but a sign of an initial change in historiographical perspective<sup>14</sup> (or, for some, of reconversion of previous experiences under the new label).

A series of interesting studies focus on school memory, at the individual, collective and public level, identifying the links that connect it to the collective imagination, to the construction of a multifaceted narrative of the learning and teaching experience (Brunelli 2019; González Gómez and Comas Rubí 2016; Meda 2022; Meda and Sani 2022; Velázquez 2019). Other studies focus on the functions of the museum and on the development of projects of active involvement of the territory, with specific attention to the social repercussions of this cultural commitment (Ascenzi, Brunelli, and Meda 2021; Brunelli and Targhetta 2022; Depaepe and Simon 2014; Myers and Grovesnor 2014). More generally, the studies that connect history to the heritage of the territory should be reported, highlighting its educational values (Ascenzi, Covato, and Zago 2021).

On another side, connecting to the interpretative categories of Antonio Gramsci, Nick Mead connects in an original and evocative way the perspective of a *long view* in the training of new teachers regarding the concept of dialectics:

Not all stakeholders in teacher education feel that they are participating in a creative dialectic generated by current neo-liberal values. The causes of this, in Gramscian terms, relate to the post-hegemonic status of the neo-liberal ideological project. This project is geared towards making ideology invisible, positioning itself as ‘quintessentially anti-ideological’ and natural, rather than ideological. In this way ... [we] are seeking to ensure, through historical consciousness, the continuity of the development of pre-service and in-service teachers’ moral and political values within the processes, pedagogies and provision of training (2023, 5; see also Nieuwenhuys, Simon, and Depaepe 2015).

In this way, leaving the limited view to the present of the profession enables a critical and conscious look at the effects of neoliberalism on education systems, which are otherwise impossible to perceive, except in terms of a general discomfort due to the conditions of carrying out the work activity.

Then we must dwell on a relevant collection of studies from 2022 that intertwines public history with the history of education, curated by Frederik Herman, Sjaak Braster and Maria del Mar del Pozo Andrés (first issue of the book series *Public History in European Perspective*, edited by Thomas Cauvin and Karin Priem): in addition to presenting various case studies (from museums to story-

<sup>14</sup> For an in-depth and interesting analysis of the educational historiography situation at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Mc Culloch 2011.



telling, in different national contexts), it relaunches the idea of finding a common map of intentions around which to generate interest, studies and actions in the region (Herman, Braster, and Pozo Andrés 2022).

At the same time, 2022 saw the launch by Firenze University Press of a new book series entitled: Public History of Education. *Theories, experiences and tools*<sup>15</sup>. The first volume is the result of work done by several universities and local working groups to connect public history with educational activities (Bandini et al. 2022), as part of *Italian Research Program of Great National Interest* (PRIN), directed by principal investigator Roberto Sani from the University of Macerata: *School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation*. The second volume is dedicated to educational experiences on the theme of the Resistance (Bravi, Martinelli, and Oliviero 2023).

Among the interesting signs of the encounter between historical knowledge, education and public history, we must remember the third congress of the Italian Society for the Study of Historical-Educational Heritage<sup>16</sup> (SIPSE, directed by Anna Ascenzi), entitled *The historical-educational heritage as a source of the Public History of Education. Between good practices and new perspectives*, to be held in Milan 14-15 December 2023<sup>17</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that in a European context, important work is being done by The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History<sup>18</sup>, in particular the research area *Public History and Outreach*, directed by Thomas Cauvin; as well as the creation of the Spanish Public History Association<sup>19</sup> and Wolfgang Sahlfeld's initiatives in Switzerland (Sahlfeld, Cattaneo, and Petralia 2021). More recently, a number of interesting projects have been undertaken, including one directed by Ian Grovesnor: *The First World War and its Legacy 2020 and Beyond: Community, Collaboration and Conflict*<sup>20</sup>. And the project, which is still ongoing, headed by Francisca Comas Rubi: *Public history of education in Spain (1970-2020)*<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Public History of Education. *Theories, experiences and tools*, <<https://books.fupress.it/series/ipublic-history-of-educationi-teorie-esperienze-strumenti/144>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>16</sup> SIPSE, Italian Society for the Study of Historical-Educational Heritage, President Anna Ascenzi (Università di Macerata), <[www.sipse.eu](http://www.sipse.eu)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>17</sup> <[www.sipse.eu/3-congresso-sipse](http://www.sipse.eu/3-congresso-sipse)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>18</sup> C<sup>2</sup>DH, The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, directed by Andreas Fickers (University of Luxembourg), <<https://www.c2dh.uni.lu>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>19</sup> Asociación española de historia pública, President Jesús Izquierdo Martín (Autonomous University of Madrid), <<https://www.historiapublica.es>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>20</sup> *The First World War and its Legacy 2020 and Beyond: Community, Collaboration and Conflict (2020-2021)*, directed by Ian Grovesnor (University of Birmingham), <<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FV001329%2F1>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>21</sup> *Public history of education in Spain (1970-2020). Social perceptions, memories and construction of imaginaries about teachers and their practice (2021-2025)*, directed by Francisca Comas Rubi (University of the Balearic Islands).

There are many signs of convergence that can be located in an emerging international trend that could be described as a participatory turn. While the humanities have traditionally been seen as the domain of scholars and experts, the need to involve a wider public in the study and appreciation of the humanities has been increasingly recognised in recent years.

The participatory turn in the humanities, and history in particular, underlines the importance of involving a variety of audiences, including students, educators, and policymakers, not as spectators and mere listeners but in shaping and contributing to the enquiry itself. This shift is driven by a strong desire to democratise knowledge, to promote knowledge useful for coexistence and social improvement.

It is in this rich context of new ideas and interesting convergences between academics and non-academics that the newly constituted *Standing Working Group* called *Public Histories of Education*, deliberated by the general assembly of the *International Standing Conference for the History of Education* at its last conference in Budapest (18-21 July 2023), is to be found<sup>22</sup>. It is a multinational project that brings historians of education together for the first time who, drawing on different perspectives and experiences, have contributed to public history, while fully recognising its importance.

It is a project that is designed to encourage a greater discussion on these issues. By involving the public in historical-educational research, opportunities for collaboration, dialogue and social engagement are generated; individuals and institutions are encouraged to actively engage in the construction and interpretation of historical narratives, fostering a sense of ownership and competence in understanding the past, in particular by effectively contributing to the preservation and circulation of diverse historical perspectives, marginalised histories and under-represented voices. This allows for a reflective exercise and critical examination of past educational practices and their impact on society, while highlighting issues of discrimination and power dynamics. Facing this kind of educational history encourages professional discussion and debate on the purposes, values, and challenges of education, which are becoming more and more urgent and far-reaching.

Finally, so here is the latest version of the *Manifesto*, consisting of an introduction and nine theories with brief commentary. You can read the text in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.

<sup>22</sup> *Public Histories of Education (2023 – 2028)*, <<https://www.ische.org/about-ische/standing-working-groups>> (2023-09-30), proposing team: Gianfranco Bandini (University of Florence), Sjaak Braster (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Francisca Comas Rubí (University of the Balearic Islands), Karin Priem (The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History), Sian Roberts (University of Birmingham).

#### 4. *Public History of Education Manifesto: A Multilingual Version*

4.1 *Public History of Education Manifesto. A Collaborative Pathway Connecting Academic Research, Teaching and Social Memory in the Field of Education*<sup>23</sup>

##### ***Adherence to the ideals and objectives of Public History***

The private individuals, institutions and associations signing this *Manifesto* have expressed their strong support for the *Manifesto of Italian Public History*, which was presented by the Italian Association of Public History at the Regional Conference of Public History held in Piedmont on 7 May 2018 and subsequently approved during the Pisa Assembly on 14 June 2018.

##### ***Historical-educational research and social needs***

The world of educational and historical-educational research has always stood at a crossroads between several disciplinary areas and many interconnected issues. The field of teaching and special education in particular has been an arena for many experiences which we can now define as public history practices, based on the paradigm of participatory action research: a form of research which in the field of education has been the favoured approach for establishing contact with local communities and for building a collaborative educational relationship especially with schools, museums, associations and local authorities.

Yesterday as today, the public historian needs to focus primarily on social needs, especially with regards to education, so that a virtuous circle of collaboration can be formed among all stakeholders. Historical knowledge, and in particular historical-educational knowledge, can play an important cultural role. In particular, historical knowledge can effectively contribute to the deconstruction of prejudices, the building of social inclusion and understanding the hidden dimensions of the teaching and helping professions, and to the leaving behind of flawed perceptions of the 'naturalness' of our personal and professional behaviours.

##### ***Nine theories to construct the Public History of Education***

1) *Public history is a great resource that belongs not only to historians, but to all those who, experts or not, intend to use their own particular cultural knowledge in order to adopt its communicative style, social commitment and methods.*

History is an instrument of intellectual knowledge that cannot be reserved only to a group of experts. It follows that the experiential world must increasingly be put into contact with the world of academic (and non-academic) research, underlining the need for a cultural encounter and relationship that can promote our knowledge of history while maintaining high standards of research quality in communicative and dialogical areas that are accessible to a broad public, or to specific audiences, particularly in the teaching and helping professions.

<sup>23</sup> First version: 29 June 2020; updated version: 22 September 2022; <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/il-gruppo-di-lavoro-sulla-public-history-of-education>> (2023-09-30).

2) *When looked at from this perspective, public history is based on social needs and tries to provide shared methods of co-constructing knowledge, moving away from the usual idea of simple divulgation, dissemination and transmission.*

If historians are willing to listen, and if the process begins with specific social needs, it is not about inventing new methods of divulgation or of 'spectacularising' historical content. Instead, it is about leaving behind the transmission model to ensure that historians work with stakeholders to embark on an exercise in critical thinking and to build shared knowledge, reflections and awareness.

3) *In the educational and helping professions, public history is an approach that:*

- *underlines the link between university and community, starting with the best practices adopted to date, even if they are not given the name 'public history';*
- *raises awareness of the long cultural and social process of constructing current attitudes and behaviours whose roots are deep and span many generations, as in the case of adult-child relationships;*
- *provides tools for a critical understanding of society, which can be used to alter and improve the work of teachers, in particular by orienting these relationships towards the 'best interests of the child'.*

In the field of education (and caregiving), a specific contribution can be made to the acquisition of fundamental knowledge, in order to improve the work of teachers and focus on the 'best interests of the child', which is a key concept of contemporary early-years culture<sup>24</sup>. Historical knowledge, in this sense, is not merely an intellectual ornament that only certain social classes can afford. It is something that has concrete utility and which serves to make informed decisions by putting cultural and institutional dynamics in perspective and giving them a spatial and temporal context.

4) *Initiatives in the Public History of Education have a natural proximity to teaching and schooling. They can make an effective contribution, both to the improvement of learning and also to the generation of cultural changes within the local community.*

Educational activities, especially those aimed at the study of history and geography, have a privileged relationship with the community, which can be emphasised through a public history approach. In this sense, teaching, by going beyond the confines of the classroom, can aspire not only to improve learning, which is obvious, but also to promote shared and participatory changes in the local community.

5) *Public history within the educational and helping professions can be used as a powerful tool for training, both at the initial stage and for in-service learning.*

Reflexivity is an important part of a teacher's skillset and can be greatly enriched by an awareness of history. It allows us to observe today's teaching and

<sup>24</sup> Art. 3, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, approved by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 20 November 1989, ratified by Italy in 1991 (Law No. 176 of 27 May 1991, *Ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*).

learning processes, not in a fragmented way, but as part of the historical path (often very long) that formed them and led to their becoming dominant over others which have been theorised and practised. In this sense, the historical approach is a very useful tool in promoting the exercise and care of reflexivity.

6) *Public history activities favour direct contact and involvement with the people, but at the same time they work with communication and digital interaction technologies, in the name of glocalism and social empowerment. From a technological point of view, this means choosing open source software, open access communication policies and adopting the principles of open science.*

The technological changes of recent years have ushered us into a new and different era of history. Choosing an open form of digital communication means creating public history spaces of great importance, starting with the simple availability of historical sources, among which we must emphasise the special role of photographs. If culture is a primary human need, like water and air, then the digital context must be seen as an indispensable platform for the exchange of knowledge and relationships.

7) *Schools, museums, archives, libraries and local authorities are the natural interlocutors for public history initiatives.*

The world of education has long been thematic and has often forged important relationships with local cultural institutions. Museums are a good example of this, as they now contain educational centres dedicated exclusively to educating the public, and schoolchildren in particular. Local institutions, working with universities on a level playing field, are the cultural infrastructure necessary for public history to develop, become rooted in the social fabric and establish a dialogue with local communities.

8) *Historical research and teaching offer many opportunities and ways to build effective and engaging public history initiatives. However we must highlight the special role played by oral history practices, life stories and autobiographies.*

Historical knowledge deals with a vast range of human experience, ranging from personal stories to the history of collectives, up to and including 'global history'. Placing emphasis on personal testimonies, although always in connection with broader cognitive frameworks, allows us to fully develop our reflectivity, promote individual and community well-being and enhance our ability to understand the present.

9) *Public history has a privileged relationship with the community and its territory, as far as the promotion and transmission of cultural heritage is concerned.*

Public history initiatives, which inherently have an educational value, can make a very effective contribution to the conservation and promotion of local cultural heritage, whether in tangible form<sup>25</sup> (such as educational museums and

<sup>25</sup> *Convention on the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, signed in Paris in November 1972 and ratified by Italy with Law No. 184 of 6 April 1977.

‘historic’ schools with their artifacts and archives)<sup>26</sup>, or intangibly, through family-based education and apprenticeships in artisans’ workshops. This is a broad set of practices, experiences and beliefs that constitute the local identity of the «heritage communities»<sup>27</sup>, which have been handed down through the generations but are always at risk of being lost or forgotten. At this level, it is possible to promote not only cultural heritage in its recognised, institutionalised form, but also the ‘vernacular’ heritage. Public history makes it possible to retie the threads of memory, preserve the dialogue between different generations and local culture, appreciate the wealth of cultural diversity and make an important contribution<sup>28</sup> to the wider education of the younger generations, as well as the continuing education of the older ones.

4.2 *Manifiesto de la Historia Pública de la Educación. Un recorrido colaborativo para conectar la investigación académica, la didáctica y la memoria social en el ámbito educativo*<sup>29</sup>

### ***Adhesión a los ideales y objetivos de la historia pública***

Las personas, entidades y asociaciones firmantes de este manifiesto expresan su firme adhesión al *Manifiesto de la Historia Pública Italiana*, presentado por la Asociación Italiana de *Historia Pública* con ocasión de la Conferencia Regional de Historia Pública del Piemonte, celebrada el 7 de mayo de 2018, y posteriormente aprobado durante la Asamblea de Pisa del 14 de junio de 2018.

### ***Investigación histórico-educativa y necesidades sociales***

El mundo de la investigación educativa e histórico-educativa siempre ha sido una encrucijada de múltiples áreas disciplinarias y numerosos temas interrelacionados. Además, sobre todo en el sector de la didáctica y de la pedagogía especial, se han llevado a cabo numerosas experiencias que hoy podemos definir como prácticas de historia pública, ya que siguen el paradigma de la investigación-acción participativa: una modalidad de investigación que en el ámbito pedagógico ha sido un auténtico motor de contacto con el territorio, así como de construcción de una relación de colaboración y formación, especialmente con las escuelas, los museos, las asociaciones y las entidades territoriales.

<sup>26</sup> *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, adopted in Paris on 17 October 2003 by the 32nd session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ratified by Italy by Law No. 167 of 27 September 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Art. 2, *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, Faro 27 October 2005, ratified by Italy with Law No. 133 of 1 October 2020.

<sup>28</sup> *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, Paris, 20 October 2005, ratified by Italy with Law No. 19 of 19 February 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Primera versión: 29 de junio de 2020; versión actualizada: 23 de septiembre de 2022; <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/il-gruppo-di-lavoro-sulla-public-history-of-education>> (2023-09-30).

Ayer como hoy, son las necesidades sociales, sobre todo de carácter formativo, las que deben situarse en el centro de las preocupaciones del historiador público, con el fin de iniciar un ciclo virtuoso de colaboración entre todos los sujetos interesados. De hecho, los saberes históricos, y en particular los histórico-educativos, pueden desempeñar una importante función cultural. En concreto, pueden contribuir eficazmente a la deconstrucción de los prejuicios, a la inclusión social, a comprender las dimensiones ocultas de las profesiones educativas y de ayuda, y a huir de la percepción errónea de la «naturalidad» de nuestros comportamientos personales y profesionales.

### ***Nueve tesis para construir la historia pública de la educación***

1) *La historia pública es un magnífico recurso que no pertenece solo a los historiadores, sino también a todos aquellos que, especialistas o no, y partiendo de sus competencias culturales específicas, quieren adoptar su estilo dialógico, su compromiso social y sus metodologías.*

La historia es un instrumento de conocimiento intelectual que no puede estar reservado solamente a un grupo de especialistas. De ello se desprende que es necesario poner cada vez más en contacto el mundo de las experiencias con el de la investigación académica, entre otros, para subrayar la necesidad de un encuentro, de una relación cultural que permita revalorizar el conocimiento histórico, manteniendo unos elevados estándares de calidad de la investigación en contextos comunicativos y dialógicos abiertos a un público amplio, o bien, a públicos específicos, sobre todo en los contextos de las profesiones educativas y de ayuda.

2) *La historia pública, así entendida, parte de las necesidades sociales y trata de proporcionar formas compartidas de coconstrucción del conocimiento, para alejarse de la idea habitual de simple divulgación, difusión y transmisión.*

Si los historiadores se ponen a la escucha y si el proceso parte de necesidades sociales específicas, no se trata de inventar modalidades de divulgación o de espectacularización de los contenidos históricos: se trata, en cambio, de huir del modelo transmisor y de hacer que los historiadores trabajen con los sujetos interesados con el objetivo de iniciar un ejercicio de pensamiento crítico, para construir juntos conocimientos, reflexiones, conciencias.

3) *En el campo de las profesiones educativas y de ayuda, la historia pública constituye un enfoque que permite:*

- *enfaticar la relación entre la universidad y el territorio, a partir de las mejores prácticas implementadas hasta la fecha, aunque no se denominen como historia pública;*
- *aumentar la conciencia acerca de la dilatada construcción cultural y social de actitudes y comportamientos actuales que tienen raíces profundas, plurigeracionales, como en el caso de las relaciones adulto-niño;*
- *proporcionar herramientas para la comprensión crítica de la sociedad, útiles para modificar y mejorar las actividades profesionales, en particular, orientando las relaciones hacia el ‘interés superior del niño’ (‘best interest of the child’).*

En el campo de las profesiones educativas (y de comisariado cultural) es posible aportar una contribución específica a la adquisición de habilidades fundamentales para mejorar las actividades profesionales y trabajar en la dirección del ‘interés superior del niño’, concepto clave en la cultura contemporánea de la infancia<sup>30</sup>. El conocimiento histórico, en este sentido, no es un oropel intelectual (que solo algunas clases sociales pueden permitirse), sino algo concretamente útil, que sirve para tomar decisiones conscientes, poniendo en perspectiva y contextualizando en el tiempo y en el espacio dinámicas culturales e institucionales.

4) *Las actividades de historia pública de la educación tienen una cercanía natural con la didáctica y el mundo de la escuela: pueden contribuir eficazmente tanto a mejorar el aprendizaje como a generar cambios culturales en el territorio circundante.*

Las actividades didácticas, en especial las dirigidas al estudio de la historia y la geografía, tienen una relación privilegiada con el territorio que se puede enfatizar precisamente con un enfoque de historia pública. En este sentido, la didáctica, al salir de los confines del aula, puede aspirar no solo a mejorar los aprendizajes, como es obvio, sino también a promover cambios compartidos en los que participe la comunidad local.

5) *La historia pública en las profesiones educativas y de ayuda se puede utilizar como una poderosa herramienta para la formación, tanto en la etapa inicial como en la formación continua.*

La reflexividad es una importante competencia de la formación del profesorado y puede enriquecerse enormemente con la conciencia histórica. Permite observar los procesos actuales de enseñanza y aprendizaje no de manera fragmentada, sino dentro del recorrido histórico (a menudo muy largo) que los ha constituido y convertido en dominantes respecto a otros que hayan sido teorizados y puestos en práctica. En este sentido, el enfoque histórico es una herramienta de gran utilidad para favorecer el ejercicio y la atención a la reflexividad.

6) *Las actividades de historia pública darán preferencia al contacto directo y la implicación de las personas interesadas, pero al mismo tiempo desarrollarán las tecnologías de comunicación e interacción digital, a la vanguardia del glocalismo y el empoderamiento social. Desde el punto de vista tecnológico, esto supone elegir software Open Source, implantar políticas comunicativas Open Access y la adhesión a los principios de la Open Science.*

En los últimos años, los cambios tecnológicos nos han introducido en una nueva y diferente era histórica. Elegir una modalidad abierta en la comunicación digital implica realizar espacios de historia pública de gran relevancia, a partir de la simple puesta a disposición del público de las fuentes históricas, entre las

<sup>30</sup> Art. 3 de la *Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño y el Adolescente*, aprobada por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas en Nueva York el 20 de noviembre de 1989, ratificada por Italia en 1991 (Ley n.º 176, de 27 de mayo de 1991, *Ratificación y Ejecución de la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño*).



cuales es necesario subrayar el peculiar papel de las imágenes fotográficas. Si la cultura es un bien primario de la humanidad, al igual que el agua y el aire, entonces el contexto digital debe entenderse como una plataforma indispensable para el intercambio de saberes y la relación entre las personas.

7) *Escuelas, museos, archivos, bibliotecas y entidades territoriales constituyen los interlocutores naturales de las actividades de historia pública.*

El mundo de la educación ha tematizado desde hace tiempo y, a menudo, ha mantenido importantes relaciones con instituciones culturales de cada territorio. Basta recordar los vínculos con el sistema museístico, que ha sido testigo de la creación de secciones didácticas en los museos dedicadas exclusivamente a la relación formativa con el público y, en particular, con las escuelas. Las instituciones de cada territorio, junto con las universidades, y de manera absolutamente igualitaria, son las infraestructuras culturales necesarias para que la historia pública se desarrolle, arraigue en el tejido social y dialogue con las comunidades.

8) *La investigación histórica y la didáctica ofrecen múltiples oportunidades y formas de crear actividades efectivas y atractivas de historia pública. Sin embargo, las prácticas de historia oral, las historias de vida y las escrituras autobiográficas tienen un papel privilegiado, que se debe poner de relieve de manera concreta.*

Los saberes históricos se ocupan de un amplísimo arco de experiencias humanas, que van desde la historia individual, pasando por la historia de las colectividades, hasta la 'historia global'. Poner el acento en los testimonios personales, si bien siempre en relación con cuadros cognitivos más amplios, permite desarrollar plenamente nuestra reflexividad, fomentar el bienestar individual y comunitario e incrementar la capacidad de comprensión del presente.

9) *La historia pública tiene una relación privilegiada con la comunidad y su territorio en lo que respecta a la puesta en valor y transmisión del patrimonio cultural.*

Las actividades de historia pública, que ya de por sí tienen un valor educativo intrínseco, pueden contribuir de manera muy eficaz a la conservación y revalorización del patrimonio cultural territorial, tanto de carácter material<sup>31</sup> (por ejemplo, los museos de la educación y los institutos escolares 'históricos', con sus hallazgos y archivos) como inmaterial<sup>32</sup> (por ejemplo, las prácticas educativas familiares y las formas de aprendizaje en los talleres artesanales). Se trata de un amplio conjunto de prácticas, experiencias y creencias que constituyen la identidad local de las «comunidades de herencia»<sup>33</sup>, transmitidas de genera-

<sup>31</sup> *Convención sobre el Patrimonio Mundial Cultural y Natural*, firmada en París en noviembre de 1972 y ratificada por Italia mediante la Ley n.º 184, de 6 de abril de 1977.

<sup>32</sup> *Convención para la Salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial*, adoptada en París el 17 de octubre de 2003 por la XXXII sesión de la Conferencia General de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO), ratificada por Italia mediante la Ley n.º 167, de 27 de septiembre de 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Art. 2 del *Convenio Marco del Consejo de Europa sobre el Valor del Patrimonio Cultural para la Sociedad*, Faro, 27 de octubre de 2005, ratificado por Italia con la Ley n.º 133, de 1 de octubre de 2020.

ción en generación, pero constantemente en riesgo de olvido y dispersión. En este ámbito se puede poner en valor no solo el patrimonio cultural reconocido e institucionalizado, sino también el más ‘vernáculo’. A través de la historia pública se pueden volver a anudar los hilos de la memoria, mantener el diálogo entre las generaciones y la cultura del territorio, apreciar la riqueza de la diversidad cultural<sup>34</sup> y contribuir de modo importante a la educación en sentido amplio de las generaciones más jóvenes y a la educación continua de las menos jóvenes.

4.3 *Manifeste de l’Histoire publique de l’éducation*. Un parcours collaboratif visant à connecter la recherche académique, la didactique et la mémoire sociale dans le domaine de l’éducation<sup>35</sup>

### ***Adhésion aux idéaux et aux objectifs de l’Histoire publique***

Les individus, les organismes et les associations signataires de ce Manifeste expriment leur adhésion convaincue au *Manifeste de l’Histoire publique italienne*, présenté par l’Association italienne d’Histoire publique à l’occasion de la Conférence régionale d’Histoire publique dans le Piémont (7 mai 2018), lequel fut ensuite approuvé lors de l’Assemblée de Pise en date du 14 juin 2018.

### ***Recherche historico-éducative et besoins sociaux***

Le monde de la recherche éducative et historico-éducative a toujours été un carrefour de plusieurs domaines disciplinaires et de nombreuses thématiques interconnectées. De plus, en particulier dans le domaine de l’enseignement et de la pédagogie spéciale, il fut procédé à de nombreuses expériences que nous pouvons aujourd’hui définir comme des pratiques d’Histoire publique, suivant le paradigme de la recherche-action participative. Il s’agit d’un mode de recherche qui, pour le domaine pédagogique, fut le motif privilégié de contact avec le territoire, de construction d’une relation de collaboration et de formation, en particulier avec les écoles, les musées, les acteurs associatifs et les collectivités territoriales.

Hier comme aujourd’hui, ce sont les besoins sociaux, principalement de caractère formatif, qui doivent être placés au centre des préoccupations de l’Historien public, de manière à pouvoir entamer un cycle vertueux de collaboration entre tous les acteurs concernés. Les savoirs historiques, et en particulier historico-éducatifs, peuvent en effet jouer un rôle culturel important. Plus particulièrement, ils peuvent contribuer efficacement à la déconstruction des préjugés, à l’inclusion sociale, à comprendre les dimensions cachées des professions éducatives et du travail social, ainsi qu’à sortir de la perception erronée de ‘naturel’ quant à nos comportements personnels et professionnels.

<sup>34</sup> *Convención sobre la Protección y Promoción de la Diversidad de las Expresiones Culturales*, París, 20 de octubre de 2005, ratificada por Italia con la Ley n.º 19, de 19 de febrero de 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Première version: 29 juin 2020; version mise à jour le 23 septembre 2022; <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/il-gruppo-di-lavoro-sulla-public-history-of-education>> (2023-09-30).

### ***Neuf thèses pour construire l'Histoire publique de l'éducation***

1) *L'Histoire publique est une grande ressource qui n'appartient pas seulement aux historiens, mais à quiconque, spécialistes ou non, capable de partir de ses propres compétences culturelles spécifiques, entend en adopter le style dialogique, l'engagement social et les méthodologies.*

L'histoire est un outil de connaissance intellectuelle qui ne saurait être réservé à un groupe de spécialistes. Il s'ensuit la nécessité de mettre toujours plus en contact le monde de l'expérience avec celui de la recherche académique et non académique, en soulignant le besoin d'une rencontre et d'une relation culturelle capable d'enrichir la connaissance historique, tout en maintenant des normes élevées de qualité de la recherche dans des contextes communicatifs et dialogiques ouverts à un large public, ou à des publics spécifiques, en particulier dans les contextes des professions de l'éducation et du travail social.

2) *L'Histoire publique, ainsi comprise, s'inspire des besoins sociaux et cherche à fournir des modalités partagées de co-construction des connaissances, en s'éloignant de l'idée habituelle de simple diffusion, dissémination, transmission.*

Si les historiens s'impliquent à écouter les autres, et si la démarche est motivée par des besoins sociaux spécifiques, il ne s'agit alors pas d'inventer des modes de diffusion ou de mise en spectacle des contenus historiques mais au contraire de sortir du modèle transmissif et de faire travailler les historiens avec les parties prenantes pour initier un exercice de pensée critique, et construire ensemble des connaissances, des réflexions et des prises de conscience.

3) *Dans le domaine des professions éducatives et du travail social, l'Histoire publique constitue une approche qui permet de:*

- *mettre l'accent sur la relation entre l'université et le territoire, à partir des meilleures pratiques mises en place jusqu'à présent, même si elles ne sont pas appelées Histoire publique;*
- *faire prendre conscience de la longue construction culturelle et sociale des attitudes et comportements actuels, lesquels ont des racines profondes et multigénérationnelles, comme dans le cas des relations entre adultes et enfants;*
- *fournir des outils de compréhension critique de la société, utiles pour modifier et améliorer les activités professionnelles, notamment en orientant les relations vers 'l'intérêt supérieur de l'enfant' ('best interest of the child').*

Dans le domaine des professions éducatives (et des soins), il est possible d'apporter une contribution spécifique à l'acquisition de compétences fondamentales dans le but d'améliorer les activités professionnelles, pour travailler dans le sens de 'l'intérêt supérieur de l'enfant', à savoir un concept-clé de la culture contemporaine de l'enfance<sup>36</sup>. La connaissance historique, en ce sens, n'est pas un gouffre intellectuel (que seules certaines couches sociales peuvent se permettre),

<sup>36</sup> Art. 3, *Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, adoptée par l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies à New York le 20 novembre 1989, ratifiée par l'Italie en 1991 (Loi du 27 mai 1991, n° 176, *Ratification et exécution de la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant*).

mais quelque chose de concrètement utile, qui sert à faire des choix conscients, en mettant en perspective et en contextualisant des dynamiques culturelles et institutionnelles dans le temps et dans l'espace.

4) *Les activités d'Histoire publique de l'éducation ont une proximité naturelle avec l'enseignement et le monde de l'école. Elles peuvent contribuer efficacement, à la fois, à améliorer l'apprentissage, et à générer des changements culturels dans le territoire environnant.*

Les activités éducatives, en particulier celles visant à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie, ont une relation privilégiée avec le territoire, lequel peut être souligné précisément par une approche d'Histoire publique. En ce sens, l'enseignement, en sortant des limites de la salle de classe, peut aspirer non seulement à améliorer les apprentissages, bien entendu, mais également aussi à promouvoir des changements partagés et participatifs dans la communauté locale.

5) *L'Histoire publique dans les professions de l'éducation et du travail social peut être utilisée comme un outil puissant de formation, à la fois dans la phase initiale et dans la formation en cours d'emploi.*

La réflexivité est une compétence importante de la formation des enseignants et peut être grandement enrichie par la conscience historique. Elle permet d'observer les processus actuels d'enseignement et d'apprentissage non pas de manière parcellisée, mais dans le cadre du parcours historique (souvent très long) les ayant constitués et les ayant rendus dominants par rapport à d'autres, théorisés et pratiqués. En ce sens, l'approche historique est un outil très utile pour favoriser l'exercice et le soin de la réflexivité.

6) *Les activités d'Histoire publique privilégieront le contact direct et l'implication des personnes concernées, tout en développant les technologies de communication et d'interaction numériques, sous le signe du 'glocalisme' et de l'autonomisation sociale. D'un point de vue technologique, cela signifie choisir des logiciels Open Source, des politiques de communication Open Access, et adhérer aux principes de l'Open Science.*

Au cours des dernières années, les changements technologiques nous ont introduits dans une ère historique tout à fait nouvelle et différente. Choisir un mode ouvert de communication numérique signifie réaliser des espaces d'Histoire publique d'une grande importance, à partir de la simple mise à disposition des sources historiques, et parmi lesquelles il convient de souligner le rôle particulier des images photographiques. Si la culture est un bien primordial de l'humanité, tout comme l'eau et l'air, alors le contexte numérique doit être compris comme une plateforme indispensable d'échange des savoirs et de relation entre les sujets.

7) *Les écoles, les musées, les archives, les bibliothèques et les collectivités territoriales constituent les interlocuteurs naturels des activités d'Histoire publique.*

Le monde de l'éducation a longtemps thématiqué et a souvent entretenu des relations importantes avec les institutions culturelles sur le territoire. Il suffit de rappeler les liens avec le système muséal qui a vu la création de sections pédagogiques dans les musées dédiées exclusivement à la relation éducative avec

le public, et en particulier avec celle des écoles. Les institutions sur le territoire, avec l'université et de manière absolument paritaire, constituent l'infrastructure culturelle nécessaire à l'Histoire publique pour se développer, s'enraciner dans le tissu social et dialoguer avec les communautés.

8) *La recherche historique et l'enseignement offrent de nombreuses opportunités et façons de construire des activités d'Histoire publique efficaces et engageantes. Toutefois, les pratiques d'histoire orale, histoires de vie et autres écrits autobiographiques, jouent un rôle privilégié qui doit être particulièrement mis en évidence.*

Les savoirs historiques traitent d'un très large éventail d'expériences humaines qui vont de l'histoire individuelle à l'histoire des collectivités, jusqu'à l'«histoire globale». Mettre l'accent sur les témoignages personnels, bien que toujours en relation avec des cadres cognitifs plus larges, permet de développer pleinement notre réflexivité, de promouvoir le bien-être individuel et communautaire et d'augmenter la capacité de compréhension du présent.

9) *L'Histoire publique a une relation privilégiée avec la communauté et son territoire en termes de valorisation et de transmission du patrimoine culturel.*

Les activités d'Histoire publique, lesquelles ont en elles-mêmes une valeur éducative intrinsèque, peuvent contribuer de manière très efficace à la conservation et à la valorisation du patrimoine culturel territorial, tant de nature matérielle<sup>37</sup> (par exemple, les musées de l'éducation et les établissements scolaires 'historiques' avec leurs objets et archives) qu'immatérielle<sup>38</sup> (par exemple, les pratiques éducatives familiales et les formes d'apprentissage dans les ateliers artisanaux). Il s'agit d'un vaste ensemble de pratiques, d'expériences et de croyances qui viennent constituer l'identité locale des «communautés d'héritage»<sup>39</sup>, transmises de génération en génération mais constamment à risque d'oubli et de dispersion. À ce niveau, il est alors possible non seulement de valoriser le patrimoine culturel reconnu et institutionnalisé, mais également celui plus 'vernaculaire'. L'Histoire publique permet de renouer les fils de la mémoire, de maintenir le dialogue entre les générations et la culture du territoire, d'apprécier la richesse de la diversité culturelle<sup>40</sup>, de contribuer de manière importante à l'éducation au sens large des jeunes générations ainsi qu'à l'éducation continue des moins jeunes.

<sup>37</sup> *Convention sur le Patrimoine culturel et naturel mondial*, signée à Paris en novembre 1972 et ratifiée par l'Italie par la loi du 6 avril 1977, n° 184.

<sup>38</sup> *Convention pour la Sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel*, adoptée à Paris le 17 octobre 2003 par la XXXIIe session de la Conférence générale de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture (UNESCO), ratifiée par l'Italie par la loi n° 167 du 27 septembre 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Art. 2, *Convention-cadre du Conseil de l'Europe sur la valeur du patrimoine culturel pour la société*, Faro, 27 octobre 2005, ratifiée par l'Italie par la loi n° 133 du 1er octobre 2020.

<sup>40</sup> *Convention sur la Protection et la promotion de la diversité des expressions culturelles*, Paris, 20 octobre 2005, ratifiée par l'Italie par la loi n° 19 du 19 février 2007.

4.4 *Manifesto da História Pública da Educação*. Um percurso colaborativo para ligar investigação académica, didática e memória social no âmbito educativo<sup>41</sup>

### ***Adesão aos ideais e aos objetivos da História Pública***

As pessoas, entidades e associações signatárias deste Manifesto expressam a sua adesão convicta ao *Manifesto da História Pública Italiana*, apresentado pela Associação Italiana de História Pública por ocasião da Conferência regional da História Pública no Piemonte, a 7 de maio de 2018, e posteriormente aprovado durante a Assembleia de Pisa de 14 de junho de 2018.

### ***Investigação histórico-educativa e necessidades sociais***

O mundo da investigação educativa e histórico-educativa foi sempre uma encruzilhada de múltiplas áreas disciplinares e muitas temáticas interligadas. Além disso, sobretudo no campo da didática e da pedagogia especial, foram realizadas muitas experiências que hoje podemos definir como práticas de História Pública, seguindo o paradigma da investigação-ação participativa: um método de investigação que, para o campo pedagógico, tem sido motivo privilegiado de contacto com o território, de construção de uma relação de colaboração e formação, sobretudo com as escolas, museus, atores associativos e autarquias.

Ontem como hoje, são as necessidades sociais, sobretudo de carácter formativo, que devem ser colocadas no centro das preocupações do historiador público, de forma a iniciar um círculo virtuoso de colaboração entre todas as partes interessadas. Os conhecimentos históricos e, em particular, histórico-educativos, podem de facto desenvolver uma importante função cultural. Em particular, podem contribuir eficazmente para a desconstrução dos preconceitos, para a inclusão social, para compreender as dimensões ocultas das profissões educativas e sociais, para sair da percepção errada da ‘naturalidade’ dos nossos comportamentos pessoais e profissionais.

### ***Nove teses para construir a História Pública da Educação***

1) *A História Pública é um grande recurso que não pertence apenas aos historiadores, mas a todos aqueles que, especialistas ou não, pretendem adotar o seu estilo dialógico, compromisso social e metodologias a partir das suas competências culturais específicas.*

A história é um instrumento de conhecimento intelectual que não pode ser reservado apenas a um grupo de especialistas. Daí que seja necessário aproximar cada vez mais o mundo da experiência ao da investigação académica e não académica, sublinhando a necessidade de um encontro, de uma relação cultural que permita potenciar o conhecimento histórico, mantendo elevados padrões de qualidade da investigação em contextos comunicativos e dialógicos abertos a um grande público, ou a públicos específicos, especialmente nos contextos das profissões educativas e sociais.

<sup>41</sup> Primeira versão: 29 de junho de 2020; versão atualizada a 23 de setembro de 2022; <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/il-gruppo-di-lavoro-sulla-public-history-of-education>> (2023-09-30).

2) *A História Pública, assim compreendida, parte das necessidades sociais e procura fornecer formas partilhadas de coconstrução dos conhecimentos, afastando-se da ideia usual de simples divulgação, disseminação, transmissão.*

Se os historiadores se põem à escuta e se o processo parte de necessidades sociais específicas, não se trata de inventar formas de divulgação ou espetacularização dos conteúdos históricos: trata-se, pelo contrário, de sair do modelo transmissivo e fazer com que os historiadores trabalhem com as pessoas interessadas para começar um exercício de pensamento crítico, para construir em conjunto conhecimentos, reflexões, consciência.

3) *No campo das profissões educativas e sociais, a História Pública constitui uma abordagem que permite:*

- *ênfatar a relação entre universidade e território, partindo das melhores práticas implementadas até agora, mesmo que não denominadas como História Pública;*
- *aumentar a consciência da longa construção cultural e social das atitudes e comportamentos atuais que têm raízes profundas, plurigeracionais, como é o caso das relações adulto-criança;*
- *fornecer ferramentas de compreensão crítica da sociedade, úteis para modificar e melhorar as atividades profissionais, em particular orientando as relações para o 'superior interesse da criança'.*

No domínio das profissões educativas (e de tutela) é possível dar um contributo específico para a aquisição de competências fundamentais para melhorar as atividades profissionais, para trabalhar na direção do 'superior interesse da criança', conceito-chave da cultura contemporânea da infância<sup>42</sup>. O conhecimento histórico, neste sentido, não é um enfeite intelectual (que só certas classes sociais poderiam permitir-se), mas algo concretamente útil, que serve para fazer escolhas conscientes, colocando em perspetiva e contextualizando no tempo e no espaço dinâmicas culturais e institucionais.

4) *As atividades de História Pública da Educação têm uma afinidade natural com a didática e o mundo da escola: podem contribuir eficazmente quer para melhorar a aprendizagem, quer para a geração de mudanças culturais no território envolvente.*

As atividades didáticas, em particular as dedicadas ao estudo da história e da geografia, têm uma relação privilegiada com o território, que pode ser enfatizada justamente por uma abordagem de *História Pública*. Neste sentido, a didática, saindo dos limites da sala de aulas, pode aspirar não só a melhorar as aprendizagens, como é óbvio, mas também a promover mudanças partilhadas e participativas na comunidade local.

<sup>42</sup> Art. 3, *Convenção sobre os Direitos da Criança*, aprovada pela Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas em Nova Iorque a 20 de novembro de 1989, ratificada pela Itália em 1991 (Lei de 27 de maio de 1991, n.º 176, *Ratificação e implementação da Convenção sobre os Direitos da Criança*).

5) *A História Pública nas profissões educativas e sociais pode ser utilizada como uma ferramenta poderosa para a formação, tanto na fase inicial como na formação em serviço.*

A reflexividade é uma competência importante da formação de docentes e pode ser grandemente enriquecida pelo conhecimento histórico. Permite observar os processos de ensino e aprendizagem atuais, não de forma fragmentada, mas dentro do percurso histórico (frequentemente muito longo) que os constituiu e os tornou dominantes sobre outros que foram teorizados e praticados. Neste sentido, a abordagem histórica é um instrumento muito útil para estimular o exercício e a tutela da reflexividade.

6) *As atividades de História Pública privilegiarão o contacto direto e o envolvimento dos interessados, mas desenvolverão ao mesmo tempo as tecnologias de comunicação e interação digital, no âmbito do glocalismo e do empowerment social. Do ponto de vista tecnológico, isso significa escolher software Open Source, políticas de comunicação Open Access, adesão aos princípios de Open Science.*

Nos últimos anos, as alterações tecnológicas apresentaram-nos uma era histórica nova e diferente. Escolher um método aberto na comunicação digital significa criar espaços de História Pública de grande importância, a partir da simples disponibilização das fontes históricas, entre as quais é necessário sublinhar o papel peculiar das imagens fotográficas. Se a cultura é um bem primordial da humanidade, tal como a água e o ar, então o contexto digital deve ser entendido como uma plataforma indispensável para a troca de conhecimentos e relações entre os sujeitos.

7) *Escolas, museus, arquivos, bibliotecas e autarquias constituem os interlocutores naturais das atividades da História Pública.*

O mundo da educação desde há muito que tematizou e manteve frequentemente relações importantes com as instituições culturais no território. Basta recordar as ligações com o sistema museológico, que viu a criação de secções didáticas nos museus dedicadas exclusivamente à relação formativa com o público e, em particular, com as escolas. As instituições no território, juntamente com a universidade e de forma absolutamente igualitária, são a infraestrutura cultural necessária à História Pública para se desenvolver, enraizar-se no tecido social e dialogar com as comunidades.

8) *A investigação histórica e o ensino oferecem muitas oportunidades e maneiras de construir atividades de História Pública eficazes e envolventes. No entanto, um papel privilegiado, que deve ser particularmente destacado, é desempenhado pelas práticas de história oral, pelas histórias de vida, pelos escritos autobiográficos.*

Os conhecimentos históricos lidam com uma gama muito ampla de experiências humanas que vão desde a história individual à história das coletividades e até à 'história global'. Pôr a tónica nos testemunhos pessoais, ainda que sempre em ligação com quadros cognitivos mais amplos, permite desenvolver plenamente a nossa reflexividade, promover o bem-estar individual e comunitário, aumentar a nossa capacidade de compreensão do presente.



9) *A História Pública tem uma relação privilegiada com a comunidade e o seu território no que diz respeito à valorização e transmissão do património cultural.*

As atividades de História Pública, que em si mesmas têm um valor educativo intrínseco, podem contribuir de forma muito eficaz para a conservação e valorização do património cultural territorial, seja de natureza material<sup>43</sup> (por exemplo, os museus da educação e as instituições escolares ‘históricas’ com os seus repertórios e arquivos), seja imaterial<sup>44</sup> (por exemplo, práticas educativas familiares e as formas de aprendizagem nas oficinas artesanais). Trata-se de um grande conjunto de práticas, experiências e crenças que constituem a identidade local das «comunidades de herança»<sup>45</sup>, transmitidas de geração em geração, mas constantemente em risco de esquecimento e dispersão. A este nível, pode valorizar-se não só o património cultural reconhecido e institucionalizado, mas também o mais ‘vernacular’. Através da História Pública podem reatar-se os fios da memória, manter o diálogo entre as gerações e a cultura do território, apreciar a riqueza da diversidade cultural<sup>46</sup>, contribuir de forma importante para a educação em sentido lato das gerações mais novas e para a educação contínua das menos jovens.

<sup>43</sup> *Convenção sobre o Património Cultural e Natural Mundial*, assinada em Paris em novembro de 1972 e ratificada pela Itália com a lei de 6 de abril de 1977, n.º 184.

<sup>44</sup> *Convenção para a Proteção do Património Cultural Imaterial*, adotada em Paris a 17 de outubro de 2003 pela XXXII sessão da Conferência Geral da Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO), ratificada pela Itália com a lei de 27 de setembro de 2007, n.º 167.

<sup>45</sup> Art. 2, *Convenção-Quadro do Conselho da Europa sobre o valor do património cultural para a sociedade*, Faro, 27 de outubro de 2005, ratificado pela Itália com a lei de 1 de outubro de 2020, n.º 133.

<sup>46</sup> *Convenção sobre a Proteção e Promoção da Diversidade das Expressões Culturais*, Paris, 20 de outubro de 2005, ratificada pela Itália com a Lei de 19 de fevereiro de 2007, n.º 19.

# Adult-child Relationships in Family Photo Albums: A Public History Experience to Train for Educational Professions\*

## 1. Educational Professionalism and Historical Issues

In Italian degree courses that prepare for the teaching profession, there is always teaching of a historical nature. For example, students enrolling in Primary Education (dedicated to preparing pre-school and primary school teachers) tackle the study of history, usually ancient and contemporary. In particular, they explore educational and pedagogical issues related to the profession for which they are preparing. This type of study is considered useful in providing a solid theoretical foundation, along with many other disciplines in the educational and psychological fields, to name but two of the main curricula.

Preparation for teaching in secondary schools has also generally included in-depth studies of a historical-pedagogical (or historical-educational) nature, in the various configurations that have followed one another over time, following many and sometimes heated debates (Chiosso 2002). Consider, for example, the now-concluded experience of the Schools of Specialisation for Secondary Teaching (Frabboni 1994) and the subsequent complex regulatory variations, up to the current new system of initial training, qualification and access to teaching roles, still in the transitional phase of application (Italian Legislative Decree no.

\* The first version of this text was published as Bandini and Caselli 2019. Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article are by Gianfranco Bandini; paragraphs 3 and 4 by Paola Caselli, Doctor of Research in General and Social Pedagogy and at the Department of Education, Languages, Interculture, Literatures and Psychology of the University of Florence. This chapter is an updated version.

59 of 2017). Similar aspects can also be found in other work settings, e.g. in the preparation of educators, support teachers, managers and heads of educational institutes and activities, whether in undergraduate or master's degree courses.

If we turn our attention to the international context, we recognise that historical and historical-educational studies are equally present in teacher training, even with organisational modalities very similar to those in Italy, as in France or Spain. It is the result of progressively raising the requirements for teaching and the inclusion of training within university studies, also for primary schools:

In many countries what we saw during the twentieth century was a steady 'academisation' of teacher education. From its origins in 'pupil teachers' and the largely apprenticeship approaches of 'normal schools' [...], the study of education as a field or discipline and the growing amount of research in and on education, gradually led to an increasing role for higher education institutions in teacher education (Peters, Cowie, and Menter 2017, 20-21).

In the European area, the Bologna Process, since 1999, has also contributed to greater uniformity of educational offers in higher education (Vögtle 2019; Zgaga 2019). However, over time, historical knowledge has become less and less present in public communication and social consideration. There has also been a gradual decrease in their weight in the training paths for teaching and educational professions: a sort of inclined plane that has gradually marginalised the historical approach to educational issues (Nigris 2004; Mariani 2014). It may therefore seem quite normal that in the world of work, i.e. after initial training, both in recruitment procedures and in the training of personnel, historical knowledge is almost always forgotten and other conceptual frameworks and means are used to address the contingent challenges of education. As a matter of fact, today we still assign historical knowledge, in particular historical-educational knowledge such as the history of school, a place in general education, but exclude them from the field of vocational training.

It is in this context, briefly outlined in its main features, that the present training proposal (called History of Education: Family and Childhood in the 20th century), realised within the one-year Master's Degree Course in *Pedagogical Coordinator of Nurseries and pre-school Services*, at the University of Florence, takes place. The starting point in real terms is not the fear over the declining social consideration of historical knowledge, nor is it the academic demand to see their subjects of study and research given greater recognition. Rather, it stems from the realisation that those involved in education, both at a theoretical level and in concrete work activities, actually, and very often implicitly, use certain precise historical knowledge. Some, but not necessarily all, are useful to better understand a given situation. What we wish to emphasise strongly is the daily and inevitable intermingling of past and present, the topicality of educational behaviour and attitudes that, delving just below the surface, appear motivated by largely pre-existing choices and experiences. When we are confronted, in particular, with professions that deal with small and very small children, we touch upon the scope of these theoretical statements. Indeed, our behaviour towards

childhood owes much (and in some cases everything) to our childhood experiences, in particular the attachment patterns established with parental figures. In therapeutic terms, but with unavoidable educational implications, it is in fact stated that:

early emotional breaks, serious deficiencies in primary care processes, heavy influences of intergenerational myths and scripts, still-living and paralysing loyalty systems are reactivated in the session, with the aim of achieving a reconciliation between the generations, to rediscover lines of solidarity and mutual understanding as much desired as unexpected over the years (Giacometti and Mazzei 2011, 70).

While in the psychological literature the close link between our family past and the current condition of family relationships is well established (Formenti 2003; Lorito and Di Maria 2008; Parrello 2014; Pergola 2011), equally important is the sociocultural side of the issue. The family context constructs a narrative that unfolds over time, made up of experiences, words, stories told, rituals, objects and environments. A specific family identity within which relationships are woven and consolidated, becoming deeply embedded in personal experiences. This can also vary considerably and take on original characteristics, even contrasting with its surroundings. For example, in the fascist period, in a climate of authoritarianism marked by severity, order and discipline, we discover how the family universe often resisted totalitarian pretensions, characterised by affectionate, anti-authoritarian and understanding relationships with the needs of others (Ginsborg 2014).

Studying the history of family relationships, both on a general level and in terms of personal history, therefore allows for an active approach to a multiplicity of educational aspects, to help future educators (but not only them) to come to terms with this incompressible variety of behaviours, to reflect on the social, ethnic, religious, identity components that are part of the everyday experience of working with children and their families (Macinai and Oliviero 2017).

In the training experience, described in detail in the following paragraphs, it was decided to work on one side on national history, and on the other side on personal family history, comparing two dynamics that are sometimes not entirely congruent, but are always enlightening in relation to the relational characteristics of subjects in adulthood. Reconstructing the history of one's own family through a comparison between generations allows one to appreciate continuities and variations in relational styles and to understand in depth what long-term dynamics are still present in our relationship with childhood today: with detachment or with involvement, with a desire for control and precision, or with a serene appreciation of children's originality and spontaneity, and so on. These are all dynamics that characterise everyday action in educational work with children and can in turn be the subject of careful reflection. This procedure, which takes due account of the many cultural variables, is not a point of arrival of the training activity, but rather an opening to further investigation, to the full consideration of the importance and relevance of personal and family dynamics as

they have been built up over time, in the passing of witnesses from one generation to the next. The thoughtful educator can therefore treasure the historical approach and use it to thoroughly understand, without simplifying schematics, the complex dynamics of family relationships (Schön 2006, 2013; Striano 2001).

## 2. Family Photographs: For an Open, Digital, Public Source

Once the conceptual elements of the training proposal have been defined, it is worth dwelling on the didactic choices in order to specify how they contribute to the main objective to be pursued: the historical and personal awareness of the relational dynamics of the family. This type of approach is based on three basic elements that are closely linked to the professionalising aim of the Master's course: the use of photography, the creation of an online digital resource, and the public history perspective.

Firstly, instead of working solely on academic texts, we chose to use a historical source widely available in all homes: the family album (Serena 2021; Tomassini 2013)<sup>1</sup>. The photo collections are in fact a deliberate document of family history, within which the highlights, often joyful, sometimes dramatic, of the members' lives can be observed. This 'intentional vision' carries with it polysemy and ambiguity, it communicates in an only apparently easy and objective way (Barthes 1980). Compared to the written document, photography has a number of peculiar characteristics of great interest that make it extraordinarily rich in meaning, conveyed with a particularly effective evocative power. And at the same time they make it difficult to understand while maintaining the critical attention and care that every historical source requires (Sontag 1978).

On the basis of several lectures devoted to the history of the family in the twentieth century (Barbagli and Kertzer 2003), the participants in the training activity were involved in finding family photographs, searching in the home, asking relatives, sometimes unearthing photo albums (but in some cases simply groups of photographs) hidden in basements and attics, which had almost been lost. The research led to the collection of many historical sources, going back as far as three generations, and their subsequent selection and digitalisation. Each photo was then accompanied by some descriptive and identification elements. For the purposes (and timing) of the training activity, certainly the F form of the Italian Central Institute for Catalogue and Documentation (MiBACT-ICCD 2016) could not be taken into consideration, but only a very small group of data, those absolutely necessary for an adequate historical contextualisation.

The most complex part was the description of the photograph and its commentary. Although these were photographs relating to one's own family experience, the difficulty of interpretation was felt and required simultaneous recourse

<sup>1</sup> On the complex topic, see the monographic section "Albums, Narratives and Processes", in *Rivista di studi sulla fotografia* 7, 2018, 8-57 (with contributions by Valentina Varoli, Beatrice Lontani, Riccardo Donati).

to oral history, i.e. interviews with family members who were able to recall people and situations and consequently comment on the photographs. This way of working, which combined the documentary source with oral history, enriched both the historical understanding and the affective aspects of this cognitive journey (Freund and Thomson 2012). The commitment to seek out photographs and talk to people, so that narratives could be read and interpreted, placed family history within the complex dialectic between local and national history. A digital archive of a few hundred images with the basic elements of documentation and contextualisation has therefore been created: a private historical memory that has been taken out of drawers and attics to be made available, in digital format, to the whole of society (Tomassini 2009). The dialogue with people and sources has thus contributed to the training of future Pedagogical Coordinator by making them listen to the past, making them aware of the relationship with the territory, of the many variations of family relationships, of the diverse forms in which affectivity between adults and children is expressed.

It should be noted at this point that the decision to digitalise the photos took the teaching work out of the classroom, thus working in a digital public history direction (Bertella Farnetti, Bertuccelli, and Botti 2017; Ridolfi 2017). Although already in the initial phase there was the involvement of many people from outside the training activity, and an initial embryo of participatory storytelling, it was with the creation of a digital resource on the Internet that a real path of opening up to other audiences, for various reasons interested in our ‘family stories’ through photographs, was set in motion (Biscioni 2022)<sup>2</sup>.

The online publication has not been realised in the typical manner of an academic archive, which preserves all its objects for a long time, carefully selected and documented by specialised personnel. An entirely different approach was chosen, but deemed more in keeping with the participatory intent of public history. The trainees independently uploaded the photographs to Flickr, a popular social network based on sharing personal photographs. The intention was to make a genuine treasure trove of photographic assets accessible, otherwise destined to oblivion, sometimes even within the same family that kept them. At the same time as making the materials available on the Internet, an operation that is already interesting and useful in itself, we began to organise meetings (in the form of study circles) to create opportunities for participation in this digital family memory, open both to other educational professions (especially in primary schools) and to a wider public interested in confronting their roots, both personal and collective. All this in the conviction that the history of education, which has always been in conversation with fundamental aspects of social living, should be used in tasks of public utility (Bandini 2017, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> See the monographic section “Photography and Public History”, in *Rivista di studi sulla fotografia* 5, 2017, 8-81 (with contributions by Adolfo Mignemi, Manfredi Scanagatta, Francesco Faeta and, in particular, Giovanni Fiorentino, “Public History and Photography: A Complex Challenge”).

More specifically, from a methodological point of view, each Master's student was asked to collect and publish a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 40-50 photographs on Flickr; the photos were to be collected in a virtual album, assigned a title, and published in it, respecting the chronological order as much as possible. Each photo must be accompanied by the following information: summary description of the subjects portrayed; photographer's name; year the photo was taken; location; preservation (e.g. private family archive ...); summary physical description of the photo (e.g. black and white, 8.1 x 5.5 cm). At the same time, once they had completed their album, each participant wrote a short abstract, in which they illustrated the theme of the work they had carried out, the motivations behind it, and their personal reflections focused on enhancing their professional knowledge as childcare coordinators.

In this way we have, even if in a small way, contributed to enhancing the so-called vernacular photographic heritage, i.e. that produced in the family circle and preserved in family albums. It is a heritage that tends to be dispersed and misunderstood in its methodological and interpretative potential, and therefore is potentially subject to the risk of dispersion. Until now, family photographs have not been used in educational historiography except sporadically. Their use thus opens up new and interesting perspectives for the exploration of social and educational experience in the twentieth century.

Having said that, I would like to point out that the choice of using a social network, rather than a dedicated platform, is not only intended to circulate photographs as much as possible, but also has a particularly suitable implication for digital public history (Cauvin 2016; Noiret 2011b; Salvatori 2017a). If the primary interest, in fact, lies in participatory storytelling and hence the communicative will of the subjects, then it is fully understandable that Flickr, as well as other similar software, allows the subjectivity of the authors of digitalisation of photographs to be fully respected. It may be the case, therefore, that some series of photographs are no longer visible, because the desire to communicate is lost and the person who uploaded the photos no longer makes them visible (by deleting them or using them privately). Accepting this opportunity, without any body or organisation appropriating the objects, means giving weight to the participatory logic, to the primary role of people, starting with those who offer their own family narratives in a free game of exchanges and gifts of memories.

### 3. Public History and the Training of Childhood Educators: The Photo Albums of the Master's Degree Students in *Pedagogical Coordinator of Nurseries and Pre-school Services*

The one-year Master's Degree Course in *Pedagogical Coordinator of Nurseries and Pre-school Services*, founded at the University of Florence in the academic year 2005-6 by Enzo Catarsi (Silva, Freschi, and Sharmahd 2015) and currently direct-

ed by Clara Silva, aims to train a professional figure competent in early and later childhood, able to coordinate educational services aimed at the 0-6 age group<sup>3</sup>.

Among the many activities, both of a theoretical and practical nature, offered by the Master's course and, in this case, more specifically by the Course in History of Education: family and childhood in the twentieth century, held by Gianfranco Bandini, since the 2016-17 edition there has been the promotion of students' reflection on their own biography, through the retrieval of family photographs, selected from an intergenerational perspective, and their publication on the Master's Flickr page, so that they can be consulted and shared<sup>4</sup>. This is in the belief that the work of collecting photos and the reflection, both personal and, via Flickr and during the Master's lessons, shared with lecturers and colleagues, on them, assume an important educational value, also and especially for professionals involved in childhood education.

Within this framework, broadening our gaze to the psychological sphere, it is well known that photography is a key instrument of art therapy, a discipline that, through artistic expression as a therapeutic and healing means, aims to promote awareness and enhancement of the subject's emotional-affective sphere, reflective capacity, mindfulness, and relational skills (Berman 1993; Hogan 1981; Krauss 1983; Weiser 1999).

The collection of photographic material relating to one's family and childhood, one's own and that of others: friends and relatives, partners, any children, fellow citizens, connected to the Master's students to varying degrees, together with the related micro-themes, to which the following section is devoted, aimed at increasing students' awareness that each individual, starting with themselves, is the fruit of a dense relational network in which they are born, grow and develop: first and foremost, that which animates and characterises their family of origin. Our cognitive, psychic, affective, emotional, and linguistic development and the acquisition, among others, of knowledge and relational, communicative and social skills take place thanks to our being continually immersed, from birth, in highly social contexts; contexts in which, in childhood, the role of parents, in the domestic sphere, and of caregivers, in non-domestic environments, assume a central importance (see Vygotsky 1962; Bruner 1986; in more recent years, in the Italian context, see among others, Di Blasio 1995; Camaioni and Di Blasio 2007; D'Amico and Devescovi 2013).

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<sup>4</sup> Master's Degree in *Pedagogical Coordinator of Nurseries and Pre-school Services*, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/150176771@N07>> (2023-09-30). To view the albums of those students who, at the time of going to press, have decided to leave them publicly available, please refer to the link above. On this occasion, regardless of whether their profiles are now publicly available, we would like to thank all the students of the Master's Degree Course in *Pedagogical Coordinator*, 2016-17 and 2017-18 editions, who actively participated in the historical-photographic reconstruction work.



In this framework and in harmony with what has just been stated, the reflection on the subject as being constitutively immersed in relational contexts, affectively complex, from birth, also promoted through photographic reconstruction works centred on the theme of one's childhood and family history, encourages the awareness in educators that each one of us has our own experience, our own family path, our own actions and feelings that are also the result of our past and the dynamics that characterise the family nucleus, understood in a broad and diachronic sense, in which we grew up. This awareness is particularly important for caregivers, parents, educators and teachers alike, who, by becoming aware of their own subjective experience, also realise that the children they care for, and the same applies to their colleagues, have a specific family history, experience, particular relational and emotional context of origin and belonging.

The formative and trans-formative value of photography emerges emphatically from Weiser's words, which are also, and in particular, valid in the framework of educational professions, as they emphasise the capacity of photographs to stimulate the subject's memory, self-reflection, senses, and affectivity through sight, in a holistic combination of mind and body:

Photographs are footprints of our minds and 'mirrors' of our lives; they are visual markers that let us know not only where we have been but also, perhaps, where we might be going, even when this is not yet conscious to us. Given all of this, it is easy to see how even ordinary snapshots can be good tools for illuminating areas of unconscious thought and feelings that were previously not accessible through words or conscious investigation. PhotoTherapy techniques [...] can be used to bring information that we have forgotten, buried, and defended ourselves against into the realm of the knowable and recognisable, especially the information we hold without words and cannot tell with words. They reconnect us with the details of our lives that were originally recorded as sensory impressions and, as well, with remembered information whose relevance we do not recognise until visual stimuli help us make associations to it (Weiser 1999, 25).

Photographic reconstructions of family biographies not only stimulated the self-reflexivity of those involved, but also promoted dialogue with members of their families. Most of the students, in fact, stated that this type of activity fostered, and, in some cases, even re-established, a dense and meaningful communication with parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, aimed at searching together for photographs, reflecting on them, recalling the life stories contained in the pictures.

The emotional-affective and communicative as well as didactic significance of this photographic exploration emerges from the testimonies of many Master's students. By way of example, we report those, most striking, from Chiara, who in the abstract accompanying the album links the work of collecting photos to the concept of serendipity and, likewise, to the rediscovery of the bond with one's parents:

The choice of the topic came about when, together with my parents, we searched for photos from many years ago in very old albums. This research allowed, not only me but also them, to retrace past moments that do not always resurface in today's everyday life. This, in fact, also helped in making me observe, much more closely and in a personal way than in the books, how so many aspects of daily life, relationships, feelings and values have changed so much nowadays, in part thanks to the great advances in technology. A phrase that comes up particularly from my parents during my personal stories or otherwise everyday moments is, 'we were not like that in our time'. [...] In my story, one word that is very important to me is *serendipity*. This is a word to which I attach the utmost importance, as it is the ability to find what one is not looking for, and I fortunately found all that from the photographs. [...] In the collection of photos, so many emotions were triggered in me that really made me realise the values that my whole family passed on to me, always giving significance to what you do, in the choices you make and the goals you set for yourself. Of my journey so far, I think the most amazing thing has been to see how proud my parents are of me for everything I have done and what I have achieved thanks to my determination, their support and help.

The formative value and, at the same time, the affective significance of the work of recovering and selecting family photographs, in this case relating to the Apulian context and, more specifically, to the Bari area, also emerge from Immacolata's words, which emphasise how this type of activity led her to reflect not only on her own family history, but also on the living conditions of childhood between the 1940s and the 1960s, particularly in southern Italy.

In this perspective, the student experienced this work as a 'journey', within herself, within her family, within the history of her home territory, which involved her, moved her, made her more aware, as a woman and as an educator and coordinator:

This iconographic journey was interesting and also exciting: a journey of discovery and knowledge that took time. The time it took to collect the photos, because I went back to my grandparents' house, who had passed away a few years ago; a dive into their box of old photos, but also a tug at the heart when I saw and read some of them. I proceeded slowly on this journey: I allowed myself time to think, to reflect on each photo, to select them, to comment on them properly, to understand what they could tell me about the childhood portrayed, whether there was something unchanged or different from the present time or whether they spoke of something that no longer exists today. And I discovered that every photo has a story to tell. More than many words. By contacting relatives of my maternal grandparents, I asked for clarification of some photos, received confirmation of some circumstances and came to know others. The childhood witnessed in my album is not just one. It is the one who died once due to a lack of medicines (which today we would call trivial), the one who was entrusted to financially secure relatives to ensure a better future, the one who went to school and worked, the one who received the burden of an almost parental responsibility towards younger siblings, the one who played and had fun with little, the one who gathered at home to party and be together.

From this perspective, the work of photographic reconstruction therefore involved and enhanced both the rational and the emotional and affective spheres of the students, often generating a positive spiral of active communication, sharing of memories, confrontation and dialogue between them and their families.

#### 4. Childhood and Family: The Reference Topics of the Albums

Over the course of the 2016-17 and 2017-18 Master's programmes, which concluded in March 2019, 79 albums were collected and published on Flickr, each consisting of an average of 35 images, each accompanied by a descriptive abstract, totalling more than 2,700 photos, published in ascending chronological order<sup>5</sup>. Thematically, the common thread running through the students' photographic reconstruction work consists of two key themes, namely family and childhood, from which in turn further related micro-themes often unravel. Among others, this is evidenced, by the case of Tania, who in her abstract underlines how her album, entitled *My Family in Childhood: three generations compared on particular occasions*, is centred on the history of one's childhood and family, but also looking at them from the point of view of the religious rituals that marked their passages or, again, of the schooling of parents, siblings, up to Tania herself:

The album consists of three small 'stories' that tell us about school, first communion and holidays. All events, or almost all, are represented in the three generations, covering a period of time from the 1920s to the 1980s; a period that encompasses major changes at the social, cultural and economic levels that transform the idea of family and childhood. The photos bear witness to the transformations involving childhood with respect to institutions such as school and religious ceremonies, the relationship between parents and children, and the family expanding into friendship in its emotional relationships. To all intents and purposes, the photos are historical documents and through the images they tell the story of society, its values and transformations.

Another student, Clarissa, on the other hand, emphasises the effectiveness of photographic reconstruction work in fostering a deeper knowledge of her own family history, improved analytical skills and greater self-reflexivity. As she explains in the abstract, in fact, the main motivation that pushed her to focus on the history of her family, both from the maternal and paternal branches, «was to have considered both my families, both maternal and paternal, a topic worthy of curiosity and analysis». In this case, the work that led to the creation of the album stimulated further reflection and awareness in the student, relating to an aspect at least apparently out of the thematic frame of reference; that is, the evolution of the role of female figures in the family. As Clarissa points out, her family has changed over the years, and with it the role of the women in it:

<sup>5</sup> For reasons of privacy, the abstracts are not published on Flickr; they are kept in the archives of the Master in *Pedagogical Coordinator* of the University of Florence, in digital format and without page numbers.

In tracing the history through the photographs of my family, a very important element emerged, namely how the role of women has changed in both of them since the 1960s. On both the maternal and paternal side, my grandmothers found themselves economically independent, allowing them to no longer be just wives and mothers but also a figure in the professional world, moving from rural to city realities.

Family and childhood therefore constitute a macroframework of reference, within and from which further themes developed, in most cases deeply interrelated. As we have already seen in part in the opening paragraph, these key issues were in fact addressed and explored by the Master's students in multiple ways, focusing on specific aspects of family life and childhood, their own and others'. For example, a number of albums have focused on the history of grandparents and great-grandparents and in rare cases of great-great-grandparents. One of the most representative works in this regard is the book by a student, Serafino, which focuses on the biography of his paternal grandmother, L., who moved from the Marche countryside to Tuscany after Second World War. The student writes in the abstract of his album, underlining, moreover, in a sort of meta-work of photographic reconstruction, his grandmother's love for family photographs:

The story of L., a girl from the Marche region of Italy of peasant origin who moved to Tuscany after the Second World War, is here directly recounted through the images dearest to her. L. keeps them carefully in the wardrobe. The 'old' photographs are a real treasure for her: a tool with which she can narrate herself, her life and her experience. Anecdotes related to objects («*Piero's beloved Vespa*» or «*Umberto's indispensable Bianchina*»), but also to places (such as the «*construction site*» or the «*field*»), people and events emerge in this short evocative journey. Although memories are sometimes clouded by the passage of time, it is possible to reconstruct a story that tells of encounters between diversity, social, cultural and economic, welcome and sharing. Born in a countryside where she «*grazed a dozen goats*» with her brother, moved to a country where «*a different language was spoken*» and finally married Piero «*who was rich for the time!*», L.'s memory offers a glimpse of social and economic evolution in Italy between the 1930s and the 1980s.

In some cases, the affective intensity that characterises the choice to focus on one's grandparents is mixed with some special stories from a public point of view: and so the private, intimate dimension within which these family photographs are inscribed expands and embraces the public and social one. This is, for example, the case of Elena's maternal great-grandfather, Teobaldo Daffra, who, as the title of the album dedicated to him states, was a «*great blind man of war*». Daffra, who was blinded by a bomb blast on the Karst during the First World War, was the first Italian to have a guide dog in 1929; he also directed the Vittorio Emanuele II Institute for Blind Children – where he met his wife, and, in the 1960s, the Italian Guide Dog School, both based in Florence (Ascenzi 2013).



Figure 1 – Lieutenant Colonel Teobaldo Daffra in full uniform – 1920, Florence; private archive of the Daffra family; photographer unknown; sepia on cardboard, 23.5 cm x 14.5 cm. On the back, dedication by Roberto Daffra to his daughter C. and her husband (paternal grandfather of the student): «To Cristina and Cristoforo in memory of their grandfather Dino, a blind war invalid, wounded on 21 April 1917».

Elena's work is also particularly significant for another aspect; as she writes in her abstract, the student had initially chosen to focus on the history, between public and private dimensions, of her great-grandfather; the recent loss of her grandfather R., Teobaldo's son, induced in her the desire to continue in order to pay tribute to her grandfather's memory and - an aspect of particular interest here - to give further significance to her own family history:

Following the recent loss of my grandfather R., I choose to continue the album with some moments of his life, to remember him and to create something meaningful for me and my family. The album, therefore, represents moments of family history, of four generations, of the Daffra family. Inside there are flashes of childhood: of Teobaldo Daffra's children, of R.'s children and finally of that of his grandchildren. R. [...] has a law degree from the University of Florence, which used to be located in Via Laura, the same university where I graduated. He falls in love with V. and with her, he has four children [...] who in turn give him six grandchildren [...]. R. was a highly respected person for his commitment to humanitarian causes, which he carried on until a few years before his death. In my work, however, I have chosen to represent him mainly in the simplicity of everyday life and in the warmth of affection, highlighting his qualities as a present and loving man who dedicates his time to his family.

Similarly, some students looked at childhood and family from a further angle, focusing on the religious rites that marked their passages: for example, by collecting photos of baptism, communion or confirmation, marriage, their own and/or of parents, siblings or, again, grandparents. In Alice's case, the focus was on first communions and family weddings. Photographic recovery work has fostered in her an awareness of how, over time, both the socio-historical and cultural value assigned to such rituals have changed, as well as the aesthetics – clothes worn, quality of the shots, posed *vs.* natural photos, that distinguish them.

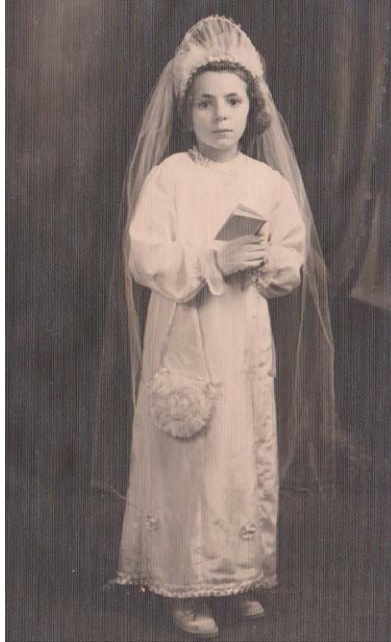


Figure 2 – My paternal grandmother on the day of her first communion – 1947, Veneto; family archive; photographer unknown; 10 cm x 8 cm.

In this regard, as the student writes in the abstract,

we can therefore see how the choice of the bride and groom's clothes has changed, formerly voluminous, bulky, very princess-like, today more fitted, and the tunics used to celebrate First Communion. In addition to the change in clothing, we can see how the choices of photographic poses have changed, specifically the backgrounds chosen or not chosen to take photos of the bride and groom. We notice how nowadays there is a tendency to choose beautiful places with spectacular views framing the subjects of the photo, as opposed to the old days when photos were taken without taking into account the background or at least without giving special importance to what was depicted behind the subjects, so much so that in the photos I have included in the album there are photos of my

grandparents on their wedding day with a truck or a car in the background. As far as Communion tunics are concerned, it is evident that before, girls used to wear clothes very similar to those of a bride, complete with veil, whereas today, the tunic is much more similar to the habit of nuns or the cassock of priests [...]. The journey to create this album has been very interesting and important to keep in mind our past and the ever-changing society.

Within the framework of the microthemes that developed from childhood and family, some Master's students instead focused their work on the couple's lives over the years within their own family, specifically understood as the result of the love stories of their family members. In this regard, we quote the words of a student, Silvia, who named her album *A long love story*, in reference to that of her grandparents. In the abstract, it is apparent that this student has worked with integrity, while at the same time showing a strong personal involvement. Once again, in fact, the work of retrieving the photos and reflecting on them fostered the involvement of the subject in its deepest dimension, in which memory, recollections, emotions and affections mingle and refresh each other:

A long love story between F. and A., my grandparents, who fell in love at the beginning of the Second World War. Against a harsh and painful historical background, they married, despite the family [of A., N.d.A.] stood in the way of their union, and they gave birth to their first child M.T., my mother. From the front, my grandfather flooded his family and his bride with letters, photos, postcards full of love, hope and a longing for home! My mother married A.B. in 1966 and from their love two girls were born: C. and me, Silvia! This historical research work was a great opportunity for me; the opportunity I needed to find the courage to reopen the door of a house to which my entire childhood and youth is linked and in which I had not set foot for seven long years. Opening the drawers and finding, in those same tin boxes I loved so much, dozens and dozens of photographs held together by coloured ribbons was an incredible emotion... The difficult thing was choosing between them!

Yet, other Master's students looked at childhood and family from the viewpoint of the family celebration of festivals and holidays: Christmas, Easter, Carnival, neighbourhood festivals, Sundays. In this regard, a student, Lucia, has named her work *Grandma L.'s Sunday: celebratory days in a family in San Frediano*. Again, as we have seen, the collection and analysis of the photos is also made possible by the collaboration with a relative, with whom the student spoke and discussed at length:

For this research work, I used the valuable contribution of my aunt M., a lover and attentive connoisseur of the memories of the M. family [...]. The chosen theme is that of celebratory days, starting from the Sunday photos with the 'good appetite' of grandmother L. as a child, to the more recent pictures of my mother M. as a young girl, on holiday with her cousins in Versilia. I have tried to interweave memories with descriptions, drawing on the recollections of my grandmother Linda, who loved to share with us grandchildren her tales of

her life as a child in the Florentine countryside. My aunt M. [...] incorporated memories and descriptions, providing valuable details about her youth in San Frediano, the district of Florence where she spent the first 14 years of her life. What impressed me the most was the care, the attention to clothing that was reserved for holidays.



Figure 3 – Grandmother L. and Aunt M. at the age of four; of this photo Aunt M. says that «On Sundays, from San Frediano, you would take a walk, arrive at the centre, Piazza Signoria, go to an elegant bar and had chocolate with cream» – 1934, Florence, Santa Maria Novella; family archive; photographer unknown; 9 cm x 14 cm.

The collaboration of the aunt allows us to recall and report, in an evocative and affectively intense manner, the words of Lucia's grandmother, which accompany the captions of the photos published on Flickr:

My grandmother, in 1920, wearing a dress with a lace collar, hat and curls on her shoulders: «It was important, then, how one presented oneself in church. My blond hair was the pride of my mother Q, my sisters ... On Saturday evenings, before going to bed, they would twist my braids into rags, I would sleep in them all night, in the morning I had ringlets» [...]. What can be said, then, of grandfather Mario: «He was beautiful, the most beautiful of all the young people in the neighbourhood. He looked like Rodolfo Valentino», his grandmother said about him. «Simplicity, elegance, refinement... For Mass, for a picnic, for a stroll around the centre». And it is here that a thought arises: «back then, to present



oneself at one's best was a sign of respect, towards others and towards oneself, a value that I believe went beyond mere material». Grandmother L. said: «New shoes, shiny, fastened at the ankle ... I walked sideways, on the pavement, so that the puddles wouldn't make them soggy. I was 12 years old and dressed like a young lady for the first time. My sister Rina had bought me shoes and a bag, my mother Quintilia had sewn the white fabric dress ... And then there was the hat, also white. I felt great, beautiful, and happy».

Family celebrations, together with the themes of religious rituals, holidays, sport, school, are also found in Chiara's album. She emphasises how this type of work has allowed her to travel within her own family history, through three different generations, and also reflects on how the very concept of a child has changed over time:

The construction of a photoalbum on the history of my family represented a journey back in time that allowed me to recognise myself in that place of origin, from which most human beings begin their journey in life. [...] Browsing through the photos one can see religious rites such as weddings, baptisms and communions; special events such as pregnancies, parties and plays; and childhood as a privileged condition within the family in all its aspects such as games, school, leisure, sport. The centrality of the child for the life of the family and the centrality of the family for the life of the child therefore emerge from this paper. [...] This work contributed to the triggering in me of a reflection which, starting from the memory and recollection of childhood emotional and affective states within the family, highlights the two main characteristics with which the latter contributes to the maturity of the individual: namely the opportunity to benefit from a high degree of dependence and the opportunity to detach from parents to the family, from the family to the immediately external social group and from this nucleus to another, in a continuous development of ever-widening circles.

Some albums focus specifically on the education and schooling of the Master's students and/or their parents, sometimes widening the view and including in the photo collections images of the nursery and primary school services in their area, of teachers, of classroom life. In this regard, a student, Andrea, named his work *Teaching around Tuscany. Maria Bucci: story of a teacher in the first half of the twentieth century*, focusing on the character and history of this teacher who, a rare occurrence here, was not her relative, but a family friend. Starting from Maria Bucci's microhistory, the photographic retrieval work made it possible to reflect on the early twentieth century school in Tuscany, more specifically in Mugello, and on the character of teachers, in a predominantly agricultural context such as that of San Piero a Sieve and San Giusto, in the Mugello countryside.

At the centre of some of the albums is the relationship of a Master's student and his family with animals, the countryside, nature. In the case of the student

Lucia's work, there is a particularly evocative photo dating back to 1919 and set in the countryside of Scarperia (Florence), which has a particular historical value: the student's great-grandmother, still in babyhood, is portrayed in it; the farmhouse in the photo collapsed a few weeks after the photo was taken, due to the strong earthquake that hit Mugello.



Figure 4 – My grandmother Bianca as a baby, with her mother Annunziata in the farmyard of their house in the countryside just outside Scarperia, in Mugello (Florence); a house that was demolished the same year following the damage caused by the earthquake – 1919, Scarperia (Florence); family archive; photographer unknown; b/w, 9 cm x 6 cm.

What is most striking about this student's photographic reconstruction work is her focus on the relationship between the children of her family and nature, in the different generations. The photos show the student's great-grandparents, grandparents and parents as children, right down to the student herself, together with dogs, cats and farm animals, as in the image below:



Figure 5 – My Aunt R. tending to the chickens in the farmyard – 1949, Scarperia (Florence); family archive; photographer unknown; b/w, 13.7 cm x 8.5 cm.

Once again, the collection of photos proved to be a valuable opportunity to talk to her family members, reflecting with them on the important emotional but also educational role that domestic animals and playing with them in the open air fulfilled, leading the student to focus her studies in pedagogy on the relationship between children, nature, *outdoor education*:

Talking to my family members, we could see that these experiences of playing and living in nature were really meaningful for them, so much so that they tried to maintain this connection with nature in their lives. My family managed to pass on this strong bond to me, so much so that I, finding myself studying pedagogy, focused my interest precisely on education in nature. Browsing through the photos of my father's family, I realised that although there were not many photos, there were several pictures of the children playing in the countryside or outdoors. So for this piece I searched and easily found photographs that portrayed successive generations of my family in play and experiences in nature. [...] I realised that the photographs that portrayed the various generations of my family in playful moments were of outdoor play, experiences with nature and carnival parties.

Some students wished to reconstruct, in photographic terms, the history of their own city or territory or, in the case of students who are children of immigrants, of their country of origin, connecting them with themselves and their family history. Of particular interest is the photo gallery published on Flickr by Flavia, focusing on the emigration of the student's paternal grandfather, who left Sicily for Australia at a very young age, only to return once retired to his native country, together with his wife.



Figure 6 – My grandparents with their son R. (my father). Souvenir photos to send to loved ones in Italy – 1965, Melbourne, Australia; family archive; photographer: Olympia Studios Melbourne; sepia, 13 cm x 8 cm.

In this case, the work of photographic collection prompted a deep reflection in Flavia on the emotional scope and historical, anthropological and social significance of migration and the importance of seeing others as a resource. This reflection, which appears particularly relevant in the case of the Master's degree students, down to the fact that nurseries and pre-schools are highly multicultural places and, above all, key centres in which and through which promote interculture:

This story of migration is very dear to me and touches me closely as an internal migrant far from family in Sicily, and I can well understand the words of my grandparents and father when they speak with melancholy remembering the brothers and sisters, with their families, left behind in Australia. My grandparents' migration to Melbourne is different from my migration to Florence in 2008 on several levels: my grandparents left to look for work, while I left to attend a degree course at university that I had been fascinated by; my grandparents worked to send money home to Sicily while I received money from my parents to enable me to pay for my studies (although I always found jobs that gave me the opportunity not to burden my family's shoulders too much); my grandparents had the goal of returning 'home' sooner or later, that is to say to Giarratana, and I don't know if I will ever have the chance to do so for various reasons including work (unfortunately too precarious in Sicily). Migration therefore remains an ever-present theme, and since the dawn of time it has been known that man has moved to seek better living conditions, for himself and his family. It would be appropriate and indeed necessary to learn from these stories, and to understand that we are all human beings with the same needs and requirements [...]. Only the feeling of love and humanity towards our neighbour can enable us to overcome barriers and mental obstacles, built because of our society in which we live, so that we can finally speak of integration and no longer just inclusion. Diversity will always exist (fortunately), and it therefore seems necessary to us to experience diversity as richness, and as an enrichment that is produced through the very relationship between human persons.

In addition to the themes illustrated so far, there is also the theme of toys and, more generally, of objects typical of childhood and family life. In this regard, the student V.<sup>6</sup> (whose album, by choice of the student, is not currently available online) focused her album on toys and childhood games in Livorno, her city. The search for photographic material, which was difficult to find, stimulated active research and involvement on the part of the student, which led her to meet a local elder, an expert in local games and toys.

At the same time, friends and relatives were involved, also via social networks, in the search for anecdotes, period photos, testimonies, thereby generating, again, a dense network of relational, social, communicative exchanges:

To the proposal of a photographic research work, I decided to respond by investigating a subject that had long intrigued me: play. I was reminded of a board I saw hanging in a primary school in 2011, showing the games. I went back to that school to gather information on who the author was. I had a landline number: «Mr C.C.», I was told, «an enthusiast who has reproduced period games with

<sup>6</sup> In this case, as in the next, the choice was made to mention the student as an exception with only the first initial of her first name, in compliance with the choice not to keep her Flickr profile public.

natural materials». So I dialled the number, he made an appointment for me. One warm September morning I went to his workshop, a room he had made for himself inside a primary school in my city. When I arrived, a small old man was waiting for me at the door [...] who reproduces old-fashioned games for the pleasure of working with wood with his hands, because he loves children and finds in this passion a mission, to share with them his knowledge, the tradition of old-fashioned games. [...] Through Facebook, in the groups of my city, I asked for the collaboration of users, to share family photographs of moments of play in the city of Livorno, in particular asking for photographs representing moments of play related to the games reported by C. [...] Photographs of free play, but also of teams of professional players. Moments in the history of my city.

Some students, albeit in sporadic cases, have instead focused their photographic work on women's stories: grandmothers, sometimes great-grandmothers, mothers, up to and including themselves and, in some cases, their own daughters (Gagliardi and Savelli 2018). One of the most striking albums in this respect is the one by R., entitled *Four generations of women escaped from the SS*. In her work, currently not available online, the student narrates the 'photos' of her great-grandmother and her maternal grandmother, Florentine Jews of Genoese origin who managed to escape, in 1943, from capture by the Nazis. The album, composed of some particularly beautiful photos of R.'s great-grandmother, dates back to the 15s/20s of the twentieth century, and includes shots of the student's parents, right down to her and her sister. These more recent photos encourage the student to reflect on how relationships between children and parents and the very concept of childhood itself change over time:

In the photos of the last generation, i.e. in the colour photos, one can see that the adults, but also the children, are less posed and in more natural positions, whereas in the photos of the F. generation, the children are often posed. This could be explained by the fact that there was a different culture of the photo, a different culture of the child, but also by the fact that photo prints at the time were very expensive and therefore even children had to commit to posing as there were very few shots available.

In this framework, the words of another student, Ariana, who chose to focus on the story of the girls in her family, between Brazil and Italy: her grandmother as a child, her mother in her childhood, Ariana herself, up to her daughter, appear particularly evocative.



Figure 7 – My mum, playing with her monkey outside the house – 1960, São Paulo, Brazil; family archive; photographer: the student’s maternal grandfather; b/w, 8 cm x 5 cm.

Ariana’s abstract shows, in this regard, how the search for family photos, their selection, their analysis, does not only involve the rational sphere and is not limited to a mere study activity, imposed by the Master’s didactic programme. On the contrary, the student emphasises the emotional, and therefore formative, in the deepest sense of that adjective, significance of the work underlying the creation of the albums:

I would like to start my reflection by saying that it was certainly exciting to do this work because through researching the photos with my grandparents and my mum, so many emotions and memories have emerged. Photography is a valuable document that describes what happens during an era and it was through these photographs that I discovered so much about my grandparents’ lives and when my mother was a child. I would have liked to have had more photos of my grandmother as a child but in her time it was not as common to take them. The choice of my photos was driven by a desire to reflect on the role of the female child in the three generations I presented. Certainly the female daughter of my generation does not have the same role as the female daughter in my grandmother’s time and our childhood was certainly very different and with different opportunities and roles. [...] Listening to my grandmother’s words made me wonder: what role has the female child played in the various generations? Did my grandmother and I have the same opportunities as children? Did we play with the same things? Did we play the same role in our games or not?

In short, as we have seen from the passages of the abstracts cited and the photos of the Master's students, the work of excavation among family photographs generates processes that we could define as true mindfulness, in which the cognitive and psychological-mnemonic dimensions are profoundly intertwined, in the most favourable of senses, with the experience and the affective and emotional bearing of the subjects involved. Indeed, this type of activity, based on photography as a valuable training and self-education tool, revitalises family and personal memories, thus touching deep emotional chords. In turn, all this stimulates and nurtures reflexivity in those involved, including from an emotional-affective point of view: this aspect is particularly relevant for educators and pedagogical coordinators, in view of the work they do, or will be called upon to do.





# Hard Times for History. The Contribution of Public History of Education to the Awareness of Our Complex Personal and Community Identities\*

## 1. History, from «magistra vitae» to the Cinderella of Educational Disciplines

In the collective imagination, history has been remembered until recent times as «magistra vitae», according to Cicero's classic definition, which effectively sums up its main characteristics: «Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis» (history is the witness of the times, the light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, the messenger of antiquity; M. Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.36). Discipline, therefore, necessary to form the citizen and guide him in present action through a memory of the deeds of the greats of the past.

Even in modern times, the educational curricula of the scions of the ruling dynasties were inspired by that definition, which, along with rhetoric and fencing and other subjects, never failed to present the study of history. The contemporary era, with the emergence of large national education systems, then saw their inclusion in compulsory education subjects, increasingly accentuating their link with the notion of homeland and the national identity to be cemented through school and the army (Caruso 2015; Polenghi 2003).

\* The essay was published for the first time as Bandini 2022. The underlying considerations were presented at ATEE's annual conference, Association for Teacher Education in Europe (*Teacher Education in a Changing Global Context*, Bath Spa University, UK, 14-16 August 2019): Bandini 2019b. This text also takes into account the discussion that followed. A special thanks to the timely and thought-provoking comments of Prof. Nick Mead (Oxford Brookes University, UK).

It is important to emphasise this strong connection between history and homeland, which is still clearly visible today in the teaching programmes of the subject that put the history of one's own country at the centre and place everything else, even entire continents such as Africa or Asia, among the ancillary historical notions, to which marginal space is devoted compared to that accorded to national history. In totalitarianisms, this instrumental and ideological use of history was particularly evident and reinforced. This implied, as a necessary corollary, the selection of the contents to be used during the course of study, placing greater emphasis on those that are in keeping with a vision of the progressive development of the nation and its affirmation in the international context (Procacci 2003).

This type of history, so bound up with political necessity, entered a crisis after the trauma of the Second World War, but even earlier, especially with the school of the *Annales*, historiography had realised the limitations of research centred on the events of war, politics and economics, rather than on the history of society, analysed in all its components and in its multiple interactions.

The difficulty of history as a tool for understanding reality is particularly evident today: it is enough to draw attention to its increasingly sporadic presence in the training curricula of the professions intended to prepare future teachers (Van Nieuwenhuysse, Simon, and Depaepe 2015), although the same consideration can also apply to the figure of the school headteacher, educators and other professionals in the educational sector. A paradox arises here that stems from the problems mentioned above and which can be summed up in the ambiguous characterisation of the discipline today: considered useful for general training (on a par with mother tongue or geography), but of little relevance when moving on to specialised training, the one that confronts the current challenges posed by the professional context. If we analyse the varied European training paths to the teaching profession, we realise that history is a declining discipline, even if it retains some specific positions, particularly in the more detailed type of history of education or schooling. But as soon as the period of basic university education is over, the history disciplines disappear: they are not taken into account in the recruitment processes of teaching staff and are generally not part of the in-service training processes, except of course for history teachers (Wallach Scott 1989; Ottaviano 2017).

The current situation of the history disciplines (and not only of the specialised history of education) I believe can be interpreted by referring to a few main factors that largely characterise it.

The first is due to the change, increasingly marked in the twentieth century, pushing advanced societies to favour the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) area, the driving force behind globalisation processes and the source of countless social and economic changes, which are becoming more and more pronounced and rapid (Jackson, Tank, Appelgate et al. 2020). The 'presentism' of culture, particularly in mass and digital culture, is a corollary of this great social mutation and the expectations placed on some areas of knowledge rather than others. Put another way: the so-called 'soft sciences', not

only history therefore, have increasingly limited room for manoeuvre compared to the 'hard sciences' (Shapin 2022). Although there are signs of overcoming this rigid distinction and the recognition of an urgent need for integration between knowledge, it is the humanities that appear to be under great pressure to redefine their tasks and relations with other areas of research: an interesting example is the Digital Humanities, which stands at the junction between classical disciplines and electronic technologies (but which still lack recognition in Italy in terms of scientific-disciplinary sectors in universities).

The second factor we must consider is inherent to the discipline of history, its nationalistic and Eurocentric tendencies, and its connection to ideological demands of various kinds (especially when it comes to the history and geography taught in schools; Blaut 1993; Dirlik 1999). Nationalistic, Eurocentric history, built around the political-economic interpretative axis, has shown all its weakness in the face of a world that has seen, in the space of a few decades, the decline of nation states, migratory flows, the environmental crisis, the waves of globalisation, the emergence of international terrorism and the clear signs of an era of new wars (to mention just a few of the greatest processes of change still underway). The twentieth century, aptly named the 'age of extremes' by Eric Hobsbawm, upset the cards of history and triggered processes of change characterised by disruption from the past. In the collective imagination, this is frequently interpreted with the question: what can we learn from history if everything has irrevocably changed?

A third factor is linked to the advent of the digital world, especially with its most recent and strongest innovations in the current century, which has triggered transformative processes of enormous magnitude, with an increasingly pronounced intermingling of biological (physical) and electronic (virtual) activities, to the point where it is no longer possible to easily distinguish the two fields (Floridi 2015). In this current context, so different from that experienced by previous generations, «the media have eroded the bridge that united historiography to the common sense of history» (Ravveduto 2020, 217): the relationship between specialist and popular culture, once marked by a series of consolidated activities (popular books, conferences, refresher courses, television broadcasts, etc.), has given way to processes of disintermediation that have established different relationships between history and the public (Cohen and Rosenzweig 2006). The new digital context has not seen the traditional players, such as parties, churches, schools, academic historians, as protagonists, but many content creators who have generated a new and unprecedented channelling of interests on the past, not without some glaring problems, promptly denounced by historians (Lacriola 2020).

There is also a fourth factor that has shaken our times, in a perhaps unexpected way: the demand to eliminate, in the literal sense of the term, those parts of history (but also of literature or art) that today appear discriminatory, unjust, and detrimental to certain fundamental rights (Ng 2022). The axe of so-called 'cancel culture', in reality fuelled by the positive desire to do justice and improve the condition of subjects and communities, has fallen on literary clas-

sics, ancient philosophy, films, statues, etc. Among the most emblematic cases is the strong protest that prompted the academic authorities in Edinburgh in 2020 to remove the naming of a building after David Hume (MacAskill 2020), due to some statements that are now considered racist and offensive. Without going into the merits of the issue, for what is of more interest here, it must be said that the ensuing debate was fascinating because the core of the dispute is exactly the meaning of history in today's society and its epistemological identity. To the point that abandoning reading, study and dialogue with the classics has been described as a real «spiritual catastrophe» (West and Tate 2021).

The two strands of the question are: should we take from the past only that which fits our current ideas, or should we make the effort to grapple with the whole burden of history, including the disturbing and ambiguous parts, both in the history of peoples and in that of individual characters? From an educational point of view, this question is of exceptional importance because it gives rise to two diametrically opposed options, which we could summarise as follows: should we educate from childhood onwards by proposing only certain aspects of the past (moralistic approach, indifferently secular or religious, which aspires to present an ideal picture of society) or should we educate by engaging in discussion of all aspects of the past (formative approach, internal to liberal-democratic culture, which wishes to present a realistic picture of society and, of course, its history)?

Considering history as an extraordinary tool for self-knowledge and knowledge of the world, we cannot but adhere to the second option, which proves to be all the more formative the more society as a whole is not afraid to confront the dark and problematic aspects that have always marked it, in a dialectical relationship between present and past (Hartog 2015; Liu and Hilton 2005). But at this point we have to answer a key question: what kind of story is suitable to support this suggestive and engaging proposal that some perceive, in reality, as a pretence?

## 2. History Is no longer the Same: Mutations and Innovations, Recent and Ongoing

Academic history (but not only this, as we will see better in a moment) has not remained the same and has changed, in some cases even radically, its tools, its sources of information, its general paradigms of interpretation. To address this issue, we will refer to a specific but illuminating case for many other situations, that of the role of history training for teachers, particularly in the initial phase of their training curriculum.

If, in fact, traditional history has been increasingly marginalised from the specialised contexts of teacher training, we must ask ourselves whether the same exclusion (or lack of consideration) is justified with regard to the new ways of doing history that emerged in the twentieth century. The question we can ask ourselves is not about the use of history as a component of the general culture of a student or a future education professional; instead, it is about the use of history as a tool for understanding reality, as a set of knowledge and skills useful for facing the current challenges of the teaching profession. And to do so with critical competence.

To support this 'pretence', and bring history out of the limbo of subjects that are of little use and easily sacrificed in favour of others, we need to take a look at the changes in the discipline. The first has already been mentioned: annalistic historiography was the first major process that shifted the primary interest of historians to the problematisation of the past, through recourse to sources other than written documentary sources, using every interpretable trace, from monumental and architectural to photographic and filmic. The abandonment of the overwhelming focus on political and economic events introduced new topics of intense and still topical interest: the everyday life of populations, the collective imagination, the history of feelings, the body, sexuality and so on.

Without any claim to being exhaustive, but focusing only on the historiographical trends that are most useful for our purposes, we should not overlook the emergence of new strands of research that have become autonomous by virtue of their specific subject. Of particular interest are the history of education and its specialisations, such as the history of pedagogical theories, childhood, schooling, and especially didactics, understood as the history of teaching subjects (Cohen and Depaeppe 1996; Hofstetter, Picard, Fontaine et al. 2014; Somogyvári, Bittar, and Hamel 2023).

More generally, beyond the world of education, it must be said that, especially in the last forty years, historical knowledge has experienced intense discussions that have enriched its methodological baggage and also seen the emergence of new paradigms of doing history (for an up-to-date overview see Sorba and Mazzini 2021). These breakthroughs (linguistic, conceptual, theoretical) took place in restricted communicative environments and probably paradoxically contributed to confirming in the collective imagination the idea of the decline of history and its vitality.

Conceptually, this is not the case, because today we are actually dealing with more sophisticated and multifaceted historical knowledge, which constitutes a real cultural enrichment. However, none of these paradigms has succeeded in establishing a new pact of trust between historians and the public (Lowe 2002), to counter this communication gap that has widened over time and that other actors have filled by exploiting the myriad opportunities of the digital environment. At this point, it can be very easy to criticise this new territory of information and reports, where a very national and traditional image of history tends to prevail, in many ways antiquated and static, with many memoiristic narratives and many curiosities about specific events. Here it is argued, instead, that what is happening on the web today is an obvious symptom, the most obvious of all, of the enduring disconnect between historians and society; and that the public history approach is the only one that has, since its inception, posed the problem of building new communicative bridges that at the same time would allow for concrete job opportunities outside the academy for scholars in the field (Kelley 1978). Today, just like then, public history is a response to the crisis in the society-history relationship, because it does not dwell on conceptual critique, but instead thematises this crisis and offers tools to deal with it.

The underlying objective is to establish a strong relationship between academic research and the social context, between historical research and cultural and educational needs, emphasising the role of history as a tool for understanding society through the active involvement of the population (Lyon, Nix, and Shrum 2017). Therefore, it is not a question of disclosing historical research to a non-specialist, general public interested only out of curiosity in historical events through the classic form of disclosure-dissemination. It is rather a matter of enabling society to use the tools of historical understanding as foundational elements of an active citizenship. If the strong democratic slant (and the many educational values, sometimes overlooked) of public history are well present since its beginnings, in the United States in the 1970s, only recently has there been a European interest that has materialised in the birth in Italy of the first association, the AIPH: in 2016, following the initiative of the Central Council for Historical Studies and the International Federation of Public History, the Constituent Committee was formed; in 2017 the Italian Association of Public History was actually established (Noiret 2019).

Defining what public history is can be a difficult, if not exhausting task. If we refer back to the early days, we can find some definitions that were born out of contrast to the traditional academic culture, of which there were many critical aspects; if, on the other hand, we continue analysing the subsequent historiography, we realise that some points have been consolidated, making the picture much more stable and authoritative. Firstly, it must be emphasised that the public historian is a full-fledged historian who cares about methodological rigour and accuracy of documentation, aspects on which there has been no lack of critical voices. On the contrary, it is exactly because it fits fully into the historiographical canon, in one of its facets of meaning, that it can propose itself to the public and claim its own original and specific role. In the course of time, we moved from the defining and axiomatic intentions to an increasingly pragmatic explanatory approach: the defining problem thus shifted from the theoretical to the operational level, to the description and analysis of the field activities of public historians, what they concretely do, their willingness to work in this field and to define themselves as such. As defined by the National Council on Public History:

public history describes the many and diverse ways in which history is put to work in the world. In this sense, it is history that is applied to real-world issues. In fact, applied history was a term used synonymously and interchangeably with public history for a number of years.<sup>1</sup>

Definitional anxiety has disappeared and the alleged flaws of the theoretical definition have become an evolutionary characteristic of it. Public history,

<sup>1</sup> National Council on Public History (NCPH), <<https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field>> (2023-09-30).

especially with its international expansion, is taking shape as an umbrella term, accommodating the variety of approaches and national and international characteristics. And it is precisely this characteristic of fluidity that has made public history so suitable for engagement in the digital context. Indeed, the digital turn has highlighted the underlying aspects of its approach, to the point that it is now the field of greatest development (although not necessarily as exclusively digital: Noiret 2018).

In the many experiences, with various audiences and institutions (primarily museums, historical institutions, local governments), we can see that the classical communicative pattern, which envisages a complete asymmetry between the historian and his audience, is always broken (Wojdon and Wiśniewska 2021; in particular Dean 2021). There is a growing interest in finding the best ways for the public to participate in historical activities, be it in the preservation, research or creation of sources (as in the case of oral history), in the recovery of traditions and events, in the construction of digital resources, in the collection of collective and identity memories, in the development of educational activities beyond the walls of the classroom.

All of this exposes the historian to possible risks because the market demands, the wishes of clients, can lead to a loss of autonomy. But there is no doubt that there is a demand for historical work in society and that someone, in any case, will respond to these needs, be it public historians or others. In this sense, throwing oneself into the field of contemporary demands, getting one's hands dirty even with the risks of history being used for political and ideological purposes, is an important task, which is worth doing in order to break the isolation of historical research and consolidate it in its public, socially useful role. From this point of view, it is interesting to note that the concept of public history is now confusingly superimposed on that of applied history, although they originated at different times and with certain differential traits that can be identified (the disambiguation between the two terms is very interesting: see De Ridder 2021; Giuliani 2017; Allison and Ferguson 2016; Soen and De Ridder 2021).

The focus on the specific audience to be involved is not characterised by a communicative posture that adapts the message to the recipient, but by the constant search for experiences of involvement, participation, collaboration. As much as there are many possible levels of public involvement in practical experiences, collaboration between all subjects has become a constant and distinctive element: working collaboratively means trying to make history 'with', and not just 'for', the subjects of interest. This constant worry also led to theoretical proposals of considerable interest, proposing the concept of 'shared authority' (Frisch 1990). The topic lies in the intersection, and overlap, between oral history and public history: the collection of testimonies and the construction of digital archives that collect community memories represent a fascinating field of application that constantly seeks to democratise history, with a collaborative and active approach of all parties, both on a practical and intellectual level. The co-construction of knowledge therefore makes new contributions to histori-



cal research, but at the same time, it causes personal meanings of the historical narrative to be elaborated, effectively mixing memory and history, embracing their mutual influences.

It is worth mentioning at this point an issue that allows us to place the use of historical knowledge, in the form indicated above, within a broader context of great interest. Public history, in fact, can be seen as a specific model of citizen science and also as its most interesting and refined example in the disciplinary field of history. In recent years, the concept of citizen science has made it possible to focus attention on the importance of open and citizen-participated science (Vohland et al. 2021; Tauginiené et al. 2020). Society's increasing level of education has lowered the barriers between academic science and popular knowledge; it has increased the need to create moments of collaboration in research projects, including in the form of volunteering and even widespread financial support (through online crowdfunding platforms). In some cases, it was made clear that the lack of communication channels damaged society as a whole, actually promoting behaviour that diminished public welfare. One thinks of the recurring tensions surrounding vaccinations and the role that fake news has played by effectively replacing scientific knowledge.

Talking about citizen science means promoting the development of research towards the open science model: the two aspects, the role of society and the openness of research processes, are in fact entirely complementary and mutually supportive (Miedema 2021; Open Science European Conference 2022). Public history, from this point of view, was a forerunner of both concepts, especially because of its democratic and participatory instance. Its digital version, in particular, has proved suitable for implementing the open science model that the European Union has among its objectives. As indicated by the Foster project, this implies the adoption of the Open Access communication model, which entails open science policies, open science tools, open data (FOSTER Plus 2017-19)<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Areas of Intervention in Schools and Education

Continuing the argument, before pointing to some specific areas of intervention in education, we have to ask whether public history is just a new and more articulate form of communication, thereby standing in continuity with what historians have always done, or whether it is a true discontinuity. From all the above, it seems clear that the answer is the second option, but the issue of the complete exclusion of public history from the list of historical research paradigms continues to fuel the underlying doubts towards it, relegates it to an applied discipline without theoretical depth, and fuels critical voices.

First of all, we have to consider that within public history there are very diverse experiences and that all these experiences, multicultural and multilingual, have blurred contours. This means that the collaborative and participative in-

<sup>2</sup> <<https://www.fosteropenscience.eu>> (2023-09-30).

stances (to the extent of co-construction of historical knowledge), i.e. the most distinctive feature of public history, can either present themselves in minimal forms or constitute the core of a project, according to a wide range of possibilities, with many steps in between.

From another point of view, it can also be said that there are experiences that do not present themselves as public history activity, even though they have many characteristics and indeed are. Reflecting on this aspect is also useful because lack of awareness is not necessarily associated with low effectiveness. On the contrary. There are some exceptional examples of historical (and philosophical-historical) communication that do not serve public history purposes, but nevertheless have some unintended and unforeseen characteristics that lead to a strong involvement of the public, to its role in the communication process (see Alessandro Barbero<sup>3</sup>, Bernadette Banner<sup>4</sup>, Matteo Saudino<sup>5</sup>).

Even if we only cross-reference the two basic aspects mentioned – presence/absence of collaborative instances and awareness of historical experience – we can see that there are many different possible outcomes. This means that public history can be configured as a genuine paradigm of historical research in all those cases in which it produces a new, original historical knowledge that is placed within historiography with its own specificity (think, in particular, of the aforementioned intersection with oral history); but there will be other cases in which a communicative instance will prevail that will produce new historical meanings that will only be such for the public involved, for their personal search for meaning, and will not constitute a general historiographical enrichment in itself.

In this regard, the idea of using «public history as a source of social empowerment for underrepresented groups» – and more generally for the needs of specific groups – proves particularly interesting and topical (Cauvin 2016, 232). If the public historian makes himself available to the educational needs of specific subjects, e.g. teachers or social workers, this leads to the production and sharing of historical knowledge, an increase in awareness of one's professional behaviour, and the generation of meanings that were previously non-existent or latent for the subjects involved. In all these cases, questions may also arise that the historian had not considered or had even deliberately excluded from the plan of his research. These are the situations in which, for instance, contact with oral sources provides a new impetus to historical work, with contact with the sources having a retroactive effect on the initial research and working hy-

<sup>3</sup> Alessandro Barbero, YouTube channel: 2020-23, *La storia siamo noi*, <[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOhGl4NRM\\_19FWiANhWvdzQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOhGl4NRM_19FWiANhWvdzQ)>; 2020-21, *Alessandro Barbero Fan Channel*, <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuEll-bc5N6ziqDjdan7MwQ>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>4</sup> Bernadette Banner, YouTube channel. 2012-23, <<https://www.youtube.com/@bernadette-banner>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>5</sup> Matteo Saudino, YouTube channel. 2013-23, *BarbaSophia*, <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCczAmcE87UncfJLyrfA2wUA>> (2023-09-30).

pothesis. Alessandro Portelli tells us this with great clarity when he recalls some aspects of the fieldwork for the volume *The Order Has Been Carried Out* (2003):

Fortunately, following an old piece of advice from Gianni Bosio, even though I had considered the interview closed, I had left the tape recorder on: the art of listening also manifests itself in not telling the interviewee, with the simple gesture of switching it off, that from now on what will be said no longer interests us. The unexpected topic of harassment *has thus entered* my research, and I have been able to verify this later in other interviews. No one had spoken of it before, and they themselves had never spoken of it except to each other, for two reasons: firstly, because until very recently neither historians nor the narrators themselves thought that this intimate dimension could be a matter of historiographical relevance; secondly, because no one had ever asked them about it or paid attention to it (Portelli 2014, italics added).

In conclusion, what has been said leads us to consider the educational sphere as one of the most interesting areas for a public history approach, which expands the territory of action far beyond the confines of a didactic, albeit renewed, teaching of history, to make it a general-purpose intellectual tool, aimed at many audiences (Bandini and Oliviero 2019).

This gave rise to the idea of writing a *Public History of Education Manifesto* together with all interested people, which was then established as an AIPH working group. A charter of intentions for working in the education sector (and in particular schools), starting from the *Italian Manifesto of Public History*. Referring back to the document for a more detailed and complete overview, here we would like to emphasise the great potential for innovation of this approach, especially in four areas, not all of which have yet been adequately explored: 1) the teaching of history; 2) the teaching of transversal subjects (e.g. civic education, intercultural and interreligious education, etc.); 3) educational activities linked to the territory and the community's tangible and intangible heritage; 4) projects for the inclusion of minorities, against social stigma and prejudice<sup>6</sup>.

These last two areas of intervention can even become a real form of social mediation, of dialogue between different communities living in the same places and attending the same educational institutions (Bravi 2021, 2022; Georgakopoulos 2017). Schools, in particular, are the most exposed to the emergence of conflicts, ethnic and identity conflict, and tensions in a given territory. In these situations, education alone cannot cope well with the dynamics of multiple social components. Here, then, the community, inclusive and open vocation of public history can take effect, aiming to put individuals, organisations and territories in reciprocal relations, in order to contribute to the creation of a personal, community, local consciousness that is historically grounded and thus more solidly shared. A way of looking at the past as a critical tool to address the issues of the present.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2 in this volume.

Finally, it should be added that the paradigm of public history lends itself very well, and better than any other historical paradigm, to be used with specialised audiences, such as those formed by teachers, headteachers, social workers (and more generally all professionals in the educational and helping professions). With all those involved, in fact, it is possible to build pathways to understanding the hidden dimensions of the profession: gaining an awareness of one's role in the past means identifying the characteristics that are still active and in motion, although not always evident (Green 2018). At the same time, it means realising that processes are always ongoing and can lead to results that cannot be taken for granted, perhaps even completely different from those desired.

The perception of the dynamism of one's professional role, and of the countless pressures to which it is subjected, is a fundamental acquisition because it allows one to break out of the erroneous perception of the 'naturalness' of our behaviour, as for example in the teaching profession: assigning grades, keeping children seated for hours at a desk, writing at the blackboard, assigning homework for the holidays, punishing or rewarding, having a prayer or a national anthem recited, all this is the result of a long socio-historical elaboration where nothing is the consequence of chance or nature.



## Public History at School: A Key Activity

### 1. Public History, Teaching History, Cross-disciplinary Teaching

When we talk about the role of history in the school context, we commonly refer to the discipline of history as it is taught in the various school levels, according to precise weekly timetables. It is an undoubtedly fair statement that enshrines the discipline as a subject in the curriculum even though it does not enhance the full potential of historical knowledge, on the contrary, it conceals an important feature of it. If it is indeed taken for granted that history is taught as an indispensable part of the education of the new generations, the conviction that historical knowledge is in fact a general intellectual tool, to be used whenever we want to give a clear perception of the intellectual course of mankind, is not as widespread: it is useful when we talk about biology or Euclidean geometry, pandemics or wars, in all human activities, with a perspective of millennia, centuries or concentrated on the last few years, the so-called 'history of the present time'. For its part, scholastic history has taken a long time to move away from the approach centred on national history with the absolute prevalence of institutional, political and regulatory aspects, also concealing its interpretative capabilities of human affairs.

When we refer to cross-curricular education, aimed at providing the tools to understand citizenship, environmental sustainability, the relationship between cultures and religions, to name but a few large and problematic examples, history should always be taken into account. In all these cases, it can make a great contribution by allowing students to acquire a real awareness of the complex

factors that interact in very often non-linear and obvious ways. Gaining awareness enables meaningful and open learning in the global dimension that no school can overlook.

Despite this, school legislators tend to disregard history, following a general tendency towards its marginalisation, as in the case of the teaching of civic education in Italian schools (Ministerial Decree no. 35 of 22 June 2020; Ascenzi 2009; for a European look: Ecker 2018).

To these burdensome tasks, both in disciplinary and cross-disciplinary education, which are so much broader than the simple reporting of dates and facts, public history can make a great and specific contribution. Established as an intellectual and operational bridge between academia and society, it can enable teachers and their students to overcome the flatness of a lot of traditional teaching, fostering an active learning process. The combination of 'lecture and textbook reading' has indeed marked much of education and still tends to be the prevalent form of teaching, especially in secondary schools.

In this context, public history can be understood as a better, more effective and more engaging form of doing history at school. An innovation in teaching (among many possible) in the direction of greater student involvement. The emphasis on involvement and better communication of historical knowledge does not contradict the aspirations of a public historian but certainly does not fully meet them. It is a type of entry level that has some but not all the significant and characterising elements of public history.

It should be said that the desire for a new didactic approach to history is very much felt by teachers, especially secondary school teachers who have had little or no experience of the innovative winds of collaborative teaching and activism since the 1950s: we are thinking in particular of small group work, teaching without grades, the rejection of textbooks, the relationship with the territory, with its cultural institutions, in particular museums (Borruso 2017; Cantatore 2022), up to the development of the historical experience of the school institution itself (Bino 2019). These are all issues (and cultural battles) from days gone by that involved only a small portion of the teaching staff but revitalised the discipline by providing valuable proposals for change that are still very interesting today.

One of the best forms in which the innovative capacity of teachers has been and is expressed is certainly associationism within which we find a line of continuity in the revival of history teaching and some significant proximity to the public history perspective. I refer mainly to the Educational Cooperation Movement (founded by a group of primary school teachers in 1951) and more recently to the Clio '92 association, founded in 1998 by a group of history teachers. By promoting conferences, publications and their presence on the Internet, they have both supported all those who wish to teach in a way that moves away from traditional approaches, particularly from bookish and mnemonic teaching, encouraging the active participation of students and emphasising the link with the dynamics of the present. Their contribution to a 'bottom-up' reform of teaching practices was very important and took the form not only of training activities,

but also of the proposal of specific directions for revitalisation. See, for example, within the MCE the national group *History and territory*, coordinated by Maria Rosaria di Santo and Lando Landi (Landi 2005, 2006); or, again for example, the *Ten theses for history in primary school* (1999), promoted by Clio '92. In many cases, the themes cherished by public history are implicit, but there is also no shortage of punctual references marking a progressive approach (Bolzon and Scarselletti 2021; Cozzaglio 2011; Gusso 2019).

Some points of contact can also be found in the activities of other teachers' associations, such as ATIS (Ticino Association of History Teachers, founded in 2003), *Historia Ludens* (founded in 1995), LANDIS (National Laboratory for History Didactics, founded in 1983) and IRIS (Interdisciplinary History Teaching and Research, founded in 1999) and above all the important academic centre DiPaSt (University of Bologna, International Centre for the Didactics of History and Heritage, founded in 2008). Many other associations have made a significant contribution, in particular the Ferruccio Parri National Institute and the Network of Institutes for the History of Resistance and Contemporary Age (founded in 1949), the CIDI (Centre for the Democratic Initiative of Teachers, founded in 1972).

In the debate, however, there is no shortage of associations that distance themselves from this position (SIDIDAST, Italian Society for the Didactics of History, founded in 2022) and voices critical of the role of public history considered to be a discipline with a «fundamentally chaotic character owing to its lack of chronological and epistemological coherence», which risks squeezing the didactics of history into a «deadly embrace» (Cajani 2020, minutes 23:11 and 22:34; on the problem of the public use of history see Cajani 2018).

If we move to the European level, some points of contact with public history can be found within organisations dedicated to the teaching of history, such as EuroClio (European Association of History Educators, founded in 1992), or associations dealing with didactics and education, but also with a certain focus on historical topics, such as ATEE (Association for Teacher Education in Europe, founded in 1976) and EERA (European Educational Research Association, founded in 1994).

On a national level, the history workshops promoted by the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research have moved in this direction of renewing the teaching of history (Giorgi 2023), developing a series of initiatives that address public history and provide digital sources that can be included in teaching paths: in particular the publishing series *History of Education Dossiers* (2022-23) and the oral history project *School Memories* (2015-23). It should also not be forgotten that some Italian regions have organised training activities to enhance historical knowledge, developing an interdisciplinary dialogue that in some cases makes explicit reference to public history (Ufficio Scolastico Regionale Lombardia 2022).



## 2. The Contribution of Public History to the World of School

History teaching in primary and secondary schools has long made use of the textbook and some aids such as atlases and maps. As a result, a well-established and widely shared teaching tradition has been established that has based its teaching practices on the school textbook, making it an indispensable tool in every classroom. While for a long time the new editions presented few measured changes, in the years between the 20th and 21st centuries there were far greater innovations that challenged the teaching tool and its uses. It is sufficient to consider, in the Italian case, the obligation for publishers to also provide a digital version of the textbook (as from the 2008-9 school year) and the recent opportunity for schools to adopt, as an alternative to the textbook, teaching resources produced autonomously by teachers (see paragraphs 2, 3, 3 bis and 3 ter of Article 15 of Italian Decree-Law no 112 of 25 June 2008, as amended).

In an almost idealistic continuation of the protests of the 1970s, today a process of school textbook modernisation is underway that stems not only from regulatory changes or the advent of digital culture, but also from other drivers of change. Of these, the most important, on which this paragraph focuses, is public history. Some of its typical instances are extremely important for teaching because they respond to the main objectives of teaching: the involvement of students, awareness of the past, participation in the processes of elaborating historical knowledge, contact with sources and cultural institutions, starting with museums, libraries and archives, and the sharing of the critical historiographical method with regard to sources. Among other things, this suggests the importance of teaching and tools that break down the walls of the classroom, bringing students into contact with documents, landmarks, tangible and intangible heritage.

In this context, reasoning over the history textbook and its characteristics involves a thorough rethinking of didactics and convincingly supporting the usefulness of historical knowledge for society (Canfora 2014; Greppi 2022). Only very recently have school textbooks appeared in Italy that have included public history as a subject content. I am referring to the secondary school textbook *Trame del tempo* (Ciccopiedi, Colombi, Meotto et al. 2022), which carries out a bold and original operation, pointing out, from its pages, the dynamic interaction between society and history, between representation and the collective imagination. We find a similar perspective in the new edition of a well-known textbook by Valerio Castronovo, *MilleDuemilaTrenta* (2023), also intended for secondary schools. Within it, Serge Noiret (with the help of Enrica Salvatori) curated ten sections devoted explicitly to public history.

Although it is not always easy to realise the typical aspirations of public history at school, its contribution is truly unique because it sets a series of actions in motion, especially on the part of students, that leave a far greater cultural mark than learning from a worksheet, taking a test or preparing a written essay. If we want to move in the direction of public history, it is therefore necessary

to clarify its specific contribution to rethinking our relationship with history: a cascade of operational choices will result from this operation, tending to involve the class (or several classes) in a collective action, typically workshop-like in nature, which has the educational need, the desire to understand ourselves through our past, at its centre. Starting from the student's questions was one of the ways in which teachers tried to renew their relationship with the new generation. One thinks of Decroly's proposal, distant in time but still striking, when he proposed a teaching of history that started from what children understood (and understand) best, i.e. the four basic human needs: to feed oneself, to find shelter from the elements, to defend oneself and to work together with others (on the figure of Ovide Decroly, see Depaepe, Simon, and Van Gorp 2022).

Notwithstanding the limited practical applicability of the proposal and the many criticisms that have been levelled at a story that is too limited and narrow, the underlining of the priority of the learner still tells us something important today: we need to start from the formative needs of students, including those which are unexpressed and which require an interpretative and orientative intervention by teachers. And from an underlying consideration, which is increasingly important today, namely the realisation of the pervasiveness of history in everyday life. A constant presence that feeds the collective imagination and yet does not automatically activate critical awareness and reflective knowledge:

History is a part of everyday life. We consume stories about the past in films, musicals, and lectures. We read historical fiction, create and consume memes, visit historical sites and museums, play historical games, and preserve and investigate family history. We seek out information to contextualise and understand the present. This everyday public history lives mostly independently of the history taught and learned in schools (Martin 2019, 84).

Involving the audience becomes not just a way to have disciplined classes, but the very essence of teaching, the way to take a critical look at all the elements of history in our lives. For its part, public history extends this concept out of proportion because it considers participation in the broadest sense to be fundamental: that is, in relation to the territory, its cultural institutions, and historical sources. While we are aware that it is not always possible to have all the required ingredients necessary, we can represent with a diagram the fundamental and characterising ones of a public history approach.

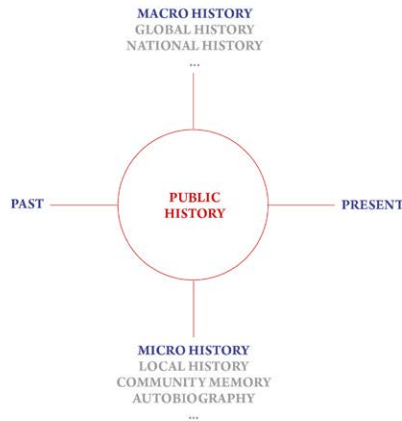


Figure 8 – Public history approach: relationships between the key dimensions (own elaboration).

Therefore, public history stands at the crossroads of several elements, starting with the fundamental relationship between past and present. This relationship should not be trivialised, as if it were taken for granted: it is actually the result of reflection and research that lead to the identification of a problematic issue. As the *Annales School* has masterfully taught us, asking the question is the first step in making history. Each generation therefore has its own specific relationship with the past because it moves, inevitably, from the unresolved questions and anxieties of the present, questions and angst that only become normal and urgent at a given historical moment: as is well known, it took a long time to arrive at the writing of a women's or childhood history, to limit ourselves to two examples of particular importance and significance.

Relating the past to the present is, in this sense, much more complicated than expected because history does not present itself as a list of facts, exhaustive and fixed once and for all, but as an endless excavation and interpretation of the past (Gardner and Hamilton 2017).

On the vertical axis, the graphic representation highlights how public history is typically at the centre of another set of relationships of meaning, between macro-histories (national history, global history) and micro-histories (the life histories of learning subjects, the memories of the local community). Relating the 'big story' to the 'small stories' means discovering deviations, differences, variations: it means being able to appreciate the inexhaustible richness of human experience that can hardly be schematised into large, cohesive narratives, but opens up to the plurality of meanings and experiences (Ottaviano 2017).

This network of relations, whose driving force is public history, inevitably puts students in contact with the territory: with people, museums, archives, librar-

ies, associations. The search for sources, their collection and systematisation, is part of this slow and cautious way of making history, which needs involvement and participation as fundamental elements.

From what has been said, it appears that history, understood both as a school discipline and as an intellectual tool for understanding reality, can indeed be considered one of the strategic areas of educational institutions, in a perspective of interdisciplinary openness aimed towards the development of critical and reflective thinking. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the European project *Critical History: Adapting history education to the challenges of today's digitised, globalised, and diverse societies in Europe* (2020-23), coordinated by Mare Oja of Tallinn University. One of the initiatives is the collection of significant teaching experiences

that make use of the achievements of and introduce pupils to public history. History education can serve as an introduction to public history not only by familiarising young people with the traces of history around them, with the institutions dealing with the heritage of the past (such as museums, historic sites, cultural centres) but also by implementing teaching strategies that treat pupils as co-creators of the teaching-learning process, not merely as recipients of teacher's instruction (Euroclio, 3 March, 2022).

### 3. Passion for History, Public History Experiences in Italian Schools

To elaborate on the above, I believe that the best way is to propose some case studies from experiences explicitly focused on public history, especially in schools. It is necessary to start with *Cliomedia Officina*, a pioneering activity of offering historical services for the community that was established in 1985 (today *Cliomedia Public History Association*). Its story is intertwined with the experience of several public historians and in particular that of Chiara Ottaviano, who has conducted extensive historical research and directed documentaries, digital and audiovisual products. Her passion and expertise are responsible for both local and national initiatives, some of them together with educational institutions, since the 1990s<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, the link with schools, communities and territories has been reinforced further, as demonstrated by the establishment in 2012 of the *Archive of the Iblei*, with the aim of enhancing the historical, landscape and iconographic heritage of the territory in the south-east of Sicily:

<sup>1</sup> See for example: *Drawings of the World. The Doing and the Saying, in contact*. Interdisciplinary didactic project for secondary schools, divided into seven notebooks edited by C. Ottaviano, P. Ortoleva and G. Fissore for Telecom Italia and Nuova Italia, 1993-95; *Fumne. Cultural project for teachers of upper secondary schools in the province of Biella*, research, seminars, refresher courses and editorial product for the Provincial Administration of Biella, 1996-99; *History of the 20th century* for Webscuola by Telecom Italia and the Ministry of Education, portal for teaching contemporary history, 1997-99.

a digital history project that is gradually being implemented by new sources coming from the participation of the communities of the various towns in the area (Ottaviano 2014).

Among the initiatives for the promotion of historical culture that over time have woven relations with the world of schooling, even if not exclusively and specifically, we should also mention the *International History Festival*, now in its 20th edition (Bologna, 21-29 October 2023; Borghi 2014), as well as the many historical re-enactments (Salvatori 2017b) and the commitment of museums and archives in involving students through specific initiatives (Franco 1997; Grassi 2015; Trofanenko 2010).

But wishing now to refer to the initiatives that see schools as protagonists and promoters of public history activities, we will now focus on some specific events, starting with the 2018 conference dedicated to the public history of education (organised by me with Stefano Oliviero, see the second chapter in this volume): at that time I was struck by the immediate and positive response of the schools that had been invited to participate, much more in number than I would have expected, given the scarcity of history refresher courses for teachers (in particular primary school teachers) and in general of attention to the subject by the competent ministries.

In the same period of time, the first initiative specifically dedicated to the relationship between schools and public history was developed in Lecce, starting with a study seminar in 2017 and then in the following years with the annual organisation of the *International Festival of Public History*<sup>2</sup>, again with the support and collaboration of the province of Lecce and various cultural institutions and with many schools, both primary and secondary. The events were promoted by the *Centre for the Study of Atlantic Mediterranean Relations*, under the guidance of its president, Giuliana Iurliano, who identified the centrality of public history in its special capacity to connect the school context with local communities. Referring to the project *The Great War in Terra d'Otranto*, Iurliano explains the issue very clearly

The idea of setting up a digital archive was inspired by the experience of the centenary of the Great War: in the four years of the project, which involved the territory in depth, the students of numerous school institutes, in 'in the dark'

<sup>2</sup> Study seminar, *Public History between didactics and communication*, Lecce, 7-8 November 2017; *International Festival of Public History*: 1st edition, *The Great War in Terra d'Otranto*, Lecce-Tricase, 4-7 November 2018; 2nd edition, *Stories of Communities and Communities of History. The Role of Public History for the Enhancement of Local Communities*, Lecce, 13-16 November 2019 (event awarded the Medal of the Presidency of the Italian Republic for high cultural, scientific and artistic value); 3rd edition, *The Olive Tree. Memories of the Mediterranean between history, dialogue and economy*, Lecce, 27 November 2020, online; 4th edition, *The school talks. Stories from yesterday's and today's school communities*, Lecce, 29-30 November 2021; 5th edition, *Memories of stone, memories of paper*, 28-30 November 2022; 6th edition, *Stories of History. Biographies, diaries, correspondence, oral testimonies*, Lecce 27-29 November 2023.

didactic workshops, found an enormous amount of unpublished sources from their own families, sources that would have remained 'private' and hidden, if not, in some cases, abandoned or destroyed. The workshop activities aroused great interest in the young students, who realised that history also passes through their homes and, more importantly, they learnt to approach the work of the historian, to analyse and examine sources of various types, to process them and to contextualise them in a more general framework, linking them to national and international processes and events (Iurlano 2019, 61).

The proposed activities took history beyond the walls of the classroom, in search of historical sources, in an unusual situation compared to traditional didactics whereby materials are already organised, selected and prepared for educational use. These 'in the dark' experiences have:

paradoxically created a kind of equal educational situation [...] the teachers had to, creatively and in real time, give the right stimuli, suggest the type of in-depth study needed, create learning situations and teaching activities from scratch that could help the students put those pieces of personal and local history back together, reconnecting it to the general framework in which it must necessarily be inserted (Iurlano 2019, 61-62).

Finally, to close this review of teachers' and students' experiences, I think it is interesting to give an account of the project dedicated to schools within the 5th conference of the *Italian Public History Association* (Florence, 6-10 June 2023). Both Serge Noiret, as president of the AIPH, and Pamela Giorgi, as delegate of the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research<sup>3</sup>, strongly supported the project, which received a significant and large response. Projects could be carried out in many subject areas, not only those strictly related to history teaching in schools, but also in cross-curricular education. By way of example:

- public history and civic education activities;
- oral history and community memories;
- photographs and community memories;
- material history and community memories;
- digital history, dissemination and production of history content;
- adoption of Wikipedia to study and communicate public school memory;
- adoption of Wikipedia (or other platforms) for the valorisation and promotion of cultural heritage;
- monuments and places of memory;
- re-enactments and Living History;

<sup>3</sup> National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research, *Research Structure 12 Historical Heritage Enhancement*, coordinator Pamela Giorgi. The project for schools was proposed by Gianfranco Bandini, coordinator of the *AIPH Working Group on the Public History of Education* and supported by the *AIPH Working Group on Schools*, coordinated by Agostino Bistarelli.

- theatrical activities and dramatisation of historical events;
- public history and sustainability education activities;
- public history activities in museums, libraries, archives;
- activities for the enhancement of cultural, tangible and intangible heritage;
- history of the environment and the landscape.

During the conference, we experienced the passion and competence with which the activities were conducted, the desire to innovate and to better understand the world through the historical approach. Referring to the digital resources for a reading of all the proposals<sup>4</sup>, here we will focus on some key concepts in brief.

Elisabetta Scroccaro identifies student activism and historical awareness as outcomes of the activities carried out within a Vocational Training School:

The educational activity made it possible to rediscover history as a tool to understand the present and our social behaviour, which often borders on prejudice or even racism. It has given all students the opportunity to be active players in the school environment in a truly unique way compared to normal teaching: it has been a great resource for enhancing talents that are often not made apparent in questions, in tests, in routine teaching situations.<sup>5</sup>

Giuliana Lonardi emphasises one effect of this way of making history, which is the re-appropriation of public spaces. In fact, the students of the Higher Education Institute engaged in a digital mapping of some communities that

in our opinion, it can be considered a model of activity with a high social value, in terms of cultural progress and active citizenship, since [...] it is able to induce a transformation in the perception and use of public space from the generic non-places that globalisation has introduced into the everyday experience (of young and old) to places characterised by a relevant historical and cultural depth.<sup>6</sup>

Engaging in public history activities changes the traditional didactic structure and introduces the possibility of being surprised by the discovery of sources. This makes history «accessible, approachable and outside rigid academic and textbook schemes» as Stefania Guglielmino puts it:

<sup>4</sup> AIPH, Associazione Italiana di Public History, *Progetti delle scuole presentati alla 5ª Conferenza* (Firenze, 6-10 giugno 2023), <<https://aiph.hypotheses.org/12976>> (2023-09-30).

<sup>5</sup> Bison and Scroccaro (Professional Training School Lepido Rocco Foundation – Cfp San Luigi, San Dona' di Piave, Venice; Headteacher Laura Cazzaro) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/CFP-San-Luigi\\_NOI-CON-IL-FUTURO-IN-MANO.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/CFP-San-Luigi_NOI-CON-IL-FUTURO-IN-MANO.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>6</sup> Lonardi (Tommaso D'Oria Higher Education Institute, secondary school students, Turin; Headteacher Mauro Felice Masera) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IIS-D\\_Oria\\_MAPPATURA-DIGITALE-DI-COMUNITA.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IIS-D_Oria_MAPPATURA-DIGITALE-DI-COMUNITA.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

Perhaps we had not foreseen that the analysis of the history of an upper middle-class Reggio Emilia family of Jewish origin, which played an important role for the city and for our country, would bring to light many sources, some of them unpublished; [...] it was as if the city [Reggio Emilia] and the history of the family were yearning to be rediscovered. Citizens were able to see with their own eyes what is done at school and how children work, what they know how to do, and the school on the other hand was able to use the resources of the territory as training agencies, which interacted with the school in a process of real discovery and research.<sup>7</sup>

Other schools have moved in the same direction, making history alive and tangible as it relates to people's stories, starting with family stories. This is how Enea Nottoli expresses himself on a project centred on the history of his own family in the period from the 1930s to the 1950s, which prompted middle school students to search for historical sources within their home with the intention of

create a direct testimony that can be compared with the indirect testimony of textbooks. [...] The course tends to approach subjects to the study of history in an 'alternative' way, showing how the history of their own families is intertwined with the history they find in books. [...] The activity was fundamental in making the students understand the substance of the history they were studying.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Anna Grazia Visti underlines the relationship with the local community that is formed when these types of learning are developed:

With this project, our school has shown how it is possible to promote the exchange of knowledge between different generations using the rediscovery of one's own origins and family history as a pretext; how it is possible to rediscover a sense of community through a common analysis of the past of the local area; how it is possible to deepen, stimulate, and promote dialogue within families and between families from the same local area in order to rediscover links between history and history.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, local history is a chosen field for public history activities because they connect to a specific territory and community, making the school the reference point for the rediscovery of both tangible and intangible heritage:

<sup>7</sup> Guglielmino and Landini (Alessandro Manzoni Comprehensive Institute, secondary school students, Reggio Emilia; Headteacher Alessandra Landini) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Manzoni\\_LA-STORIA-SIAMO-NOI.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Manzoni_LA-STORIA-SIAMO-NOI.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>8</sup> Nottoli (Ilio Micheloni Comprehensive Institute of Lammari, secondary school students, Lucca; Headteacher Nicola Prezioso) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Micheloni\\_LA-STORIA-IN-SOFFITTA.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Micheloni_LA-STORIA-IN-SOFFITTA.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>9</sup> Visti (Cosimo De Giorgi Comprehensive Institute of Lizzanello and Merine, primary and secondary school students, Lecce; Headteacher Maria A. Corsini) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-De-Giorgi\\_UN-DUE-TRE-STORIA.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-De-Giorgi_UN-DUE-TRE-STORIA.pdf)> (2023-09-30).



teachers and students active players in the search for sites, testimonies and historical sources. The farm is a treasure trove of history and the muted limestone stones have come to life. The pupils reconstructed their daily history marked by the passing of the cycle of the seasons and stitched together fragments of history to rediscover the sacredness of the wheat and milk cycle, of the harvest, of traditions.<sup>10</sup>

These projects are located within contemporary history, which allows new sources to be researched with a degree of ease, but even history further back in time lends itself equally well to in-depth research with the approach of public history. Gianluca Vigliarolo, who involved students and the local community in the re-enactment of the ancient splendour of the Magna Graecia city Locri Epizefiri in the seventh century BC, explains. The study of

the figure of Zaleucus, author of the first body of written legislation in the western world, aims to familiarise students with the relevance of the laws of that time, the expression of a democratic world in which all citizens had equal social dignity and were equal without distinction of sex or social class and were able, in their political role, to fully express their thoughts. The aim is to guide the pupils to grow in their awareness of the value of democracy.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to conclude with one of the projects that were proposed by the pre-schools. This was a pleasant surprise because the conference announcement was, mistakenly, only geared towards primary and secondary schools. The teachers taught the organising committee that one can make history even with the youngest children, because it is never too early if the right ways are found. Maria Laura Avellina sums up the experience as follows:

Full involvement of all 75 children and their families who took part for an entire school year, with excursions in the area to discover the deteriorating dry stone walls, photographing each site visited and entering the documentation (and topographical map references) in the dedicated padlet of the public history workshop, which later became a video on YouTube. [...] The involvement of the children, their families and the entire Ragusa community in reporting the deteriorating dry-stone walls in the surveyed area has led the municipality to look at the deteriorating dry-stone walls with a view to possible proposals for restoration.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ragusa (Berlinguer Comprehensive Institute, primary and secondary school students, Ragusa; Headteacher Carmela Sgaroto) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Berlinguer\\_NELLE-MASSERIE-IERI-E-OGGI-1.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Berlinguer_NELLE-MASSERIE-IERI-E-OGGI-1.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>11</sup> Vigliarolo (Coluccio Filocamo Comprehensive Institute of Roccella Ionica, primary and secondary school students, Reggio Calabria; Headteacher Rosita Fiorenza) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Coluccio-Filocamo\\_ZALEUCO-GORGONE.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/IC-Coluccio-Filocamo_ZALEUCO-GORGONE.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

<sup>12</sup> Avellina and Giampiccolo (Bruno Munari Pre-school, Ragusa; Headteacher Steve Mike Rosario Palumbo Piccionello) 2023. <[https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/Scuola-Infanzia-Munari\\_I-MURETTI-A-SECCO-1.pdf](https://aiph.hypotheses.org/files/2023/07/Scuola-Infanzia-Munari_I-MURETTI-A-SECCO-1.pdf)> (2023-09-30).

This has made the local community more aware of an important cultural heritage: the Iblei mountains, in fact, are one of the sites included in the Unesco list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, as evidence of the art of dry stone walling. Doing public history with very young children and their families opened up distinctly new perspectives and reminded us that one of the defining characteristics of public history is its ability to find new ways.



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# Public History of Education

Teorie,  
esperienze,  
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Is historical knowledge important for education? How can we build a shared historical knowledge with schools, communities, and education professionals? The book responds to these questions by suggesting the *public history* approach, as applied in education and, more generally, to all professions that are based on human relations. The *public history of education* refers directly to North American experiences, but at the same time it is part of a process of European cultural acceptance and re-elaboration that has one of its main points of reference in the Italian Public History Association. The objective is not to make history for the general public, but to make *public history* with all those interested, in a collaborative and participative context, in the quest for meaningful knowledge, directly related to the current and challenging needs of our society.

**GIANFRANCO BANDINI** is professor of the History of Education at the University of Florence. He is the author of studies on nineteenth- and twentieth-century pedagogical and educational issues from a social-historical perspective, with a focus on educational minorities and historiographical reflection.

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