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“Yes, We’re Open.” International Public History Goes Open Access

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Abstract: The co-editors of International Public History discuss two major innovations in the history of the journal: that from Volume 8, Issue 1 (May 2025) it will be fully open-access and, for the first time, articles will appear in non-English languages. They take the opportunity to reflect on the journal’s first seven years and anticipate where it might go in the future.

Keywords: public history; open access; multi-lingual; global south; international public history; International Federation for Public History

Welcome to the first, fully open access issue of *International Public History*, the journal of the International Federation for Public History! Volume 8, issue 1 marks a significant shift from a subscription and membership-based model to one that is freely available to everyone, anywhere in the world. When we wrote our introduction to the very first issue of *International Public History* in the spring of 2018, we said we were “convinced that it will serve as an important additional international and comparative stimulus to the field.”¹ Looking back on the past seven years, we feel very comfortable in asserting that this has, indeed, been the case. We know this anecdotally from meeting colleagues across the world who have told us how much they value the journal, or how important a particular article has been for their work, for their classroom teaching, or for the students they are supervising. We also know this empirically because of the journal’s scores in ranking analytics such as Scopus and the Web of Science. Our success encouraged our German publishing house De Gruyter Brill to invite us to join their portfolio of open access journals – and we jumped at the opportunity.

1 David Dean and Andreas Etges, “What Is (International) Public History?” *International Public History*, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2018-0007>.

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In our introduction to the very first issue in 2018 we felt obliged to explain the term public history and offer a brief account of its history, approaches, and practices. We expressed the hope that the journal would further establish “the academic credentials of public history on a global scale” and “reflect how and in which ways public history has been growing internationally” from its North American roots.² Seven years later, we are honored to be publishing dialogues between African, Latin American, South and Southeast Asian public historians which unsettle complacency about what public history is and why and how it is (or should be) practiced. These voices from the Global South reveal the richness and diversity of the field, particularly in embracing forms (text, image, sound etc.) that sustain the many layered practices associated with community-based collaborations and co-productions. They resonate with the new approaches to public history in the Global North, at least to judge by the articles on the Sensational Museum by UK-based public historians and on slavery exhibits by USA-based ones and their collaborators that also appear in this issue.

We suspected from the beginning that the journal would prove to be innovative because we were committed to moving beyond traditional academic articles and reviews to include interviews and curated conversations on a specific topic and by offering a multimodal experience through video clips, images, sound bites, and hyperlinks. Conversations and interviews, such as our curated conversation between some of the world’s leading museologists about the International Council of Museums (ICOM)’s new museum definition, have scored well in citation indices and have become popular as teaching prompts. The vibrant and wonderfully articulated discussion about the Sensational Museum project and the dialogues from the Global South and the other contributions in this issue are very much in the same vein and we are sure these types of articles will become more and more a feature of the journal as we move forward in our new open access era.

Another regular feature in our early years was a commissioned article about “public history in” a particular country. Our intention was to deepen awareness about international public history by giving readers the opportunity to learn about what was happening in other parts of the

2 Dean and Etges, “What Is (International) Public History?”

world. The first of such articles tended to offer overviews but as time moved on, we encouraged authors to focus attention on a particular theme, issue, or practice. It is a sign of the times that these articles have become harder to commission, and this perhaps reflects positively on what we might call the internationalization of the field: national boundaries seem less relevant somehow than regional ones while transnational and comparative public histories seem more and more prevalent. Many of our journal's issues have offered a "special section" on themes ranging from Fallen Monuments (Volume 1, issue 2) and Family History (2.2) to Decolonization (7.1) and Graphic History (7.2) that feature perspectives that are multinational, allowing readers to learn about public history internationally without a dedicated nation-focused article. This will undoubtedly be the case in upcoming special sections.

The adoption of English as the de-facto international language of public history has many benefits, but it also comes with limitations. In issue 5.1 we therefore published reviews on new introductions to public history from Brazil, China, Germany, and Japan written in the respective national languages. With 8.1 we have taken a new step. The dialogue between African and Latin American public historians took place in September 2024 at the IFPH's 7th World Conference in Luxembourg and was facilitated by Sebastian Alvarez and Noor Nieftagodien. Participants spoke in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Our edited and curated transcript of this dialogue appears in this first open access journal in all three languages, having translated the English contributions into Spanish and Portuguese, the Spanish into English and Portuguese, and the Portuguese

into English and Spanish. We also had the English-language contributions from South and Southeast Asia that we specially commissioned after the event (sharing with the invited contributors the transcript of the earlier dialogue) translated into Spanish and Portuguese. This new endeavor was made possible by using various AI translation platforms to start, but refined and in some instances newly translated in person by Jimena Perry and Ricardo Santiago. We owe many thanks to them and we also would like to acknowledge the support Florian Hoppe and Natalia Białka of De Gruyter Brill gave to this new endeavor. Making the journal fully accessible to a global audience by offering readers the opportunity to engage with content in multiple language is a step in the right direction in further decentering and decolonizing the field and inviting more voices to join the conversation about international public history.

In our introductory article in the very first issue we quoted from William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage; And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances." We are thankful that so many players from all over the world joined us on the new stage that IPH has provided since 2018 "to share thoughts and reflections, stories and experiences, the serious and the humorous, the sad and the tragic ones, colorful as well as dark, inspiring or disheartening, in monologues, dialogues and group 'performances' – and interacting with their audiences."³

We once again raise the curtain. So please come in, look around, and take part. From now on we are open to everyone 24/7 – and it is free!

3 Dean and Etges, "What Is (International) Public History?".