



## Book Review

**Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf. 2018. *Einführung in die Public History*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 208 pages. ISBN 978-3-8252-4909-0.**

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2022-2033>

In the last 10 years or so, the significance of public history has grown tangibly worldwide. In Germany, it has successfully established itself as a new field, both within the discipline of history proper and in those areas where history intersects with neighboring disciplines in the arts and humanities. Nothing better highlights public history's success in recent years than the creation of new professorships and master's programs. The precise definition of the field and of its objects of investigation, how it should be integrated into the university system, and everyday (working) methods continue to differ significantly among the various national higher education systems, despite a number of similarities. This path dependence of public history both affects the contents of (master's) courses and programs and is reflected in the way that basic textbooks, study books, and handbooks are conceived.

It is therefore not surprising that the book we are concerned with here, *Einführung in die Public History* [Introduction to Public History] by Martin Lücke und Irmgard Zündorf has a title that is not only very general, but also, in the German context in which it was written, both traditional and unmistakable. The text comprises six chapters. As the introduction explains (10–11), the authorship of the various chapters was divided up: Martin Lücke was responsible for the second and fourth chapters, Irmgard Zündorf for the fifth and sixth. The first and third chapters were a collaboration between both authors. The division of labor is worth mentioning because it reveals an important aspect of the development of Public History in Europe's German-speaking countries: German Public History, in addition to having been evidently influenced by its American counterpart, is rooted equally in historical science and the *Geschichtsdidaktik* [historical didactics] ingrained in the German university system. Martin Lücke, a proponent of didactic history teaching, is one of the three directors of the master's program in public history at the Free University of Berlin, whose course coordinator is the historian Irmgard Zündorf. The authorial team thus embodies the specific German positioning of public history between historical science and historical didactics.

The book covers the most crucial aspects of public history teaching, research, and practice. The first chapter provides a brief overview of the history of the institutionalization of public history in the United States and in Germany. In this context, Lücke und Zündorf give programmatic and conceptual definitions of history *for the public* and *in the public sphere*. The second chapter considers public history in terms of its close relationship with historical didactics. It draws connections between fundamental principles of history teaching (such as narrativity and multi-perspectivity) and the various ways in which historical knowledge can be acquired in the public sphere. The social role of history in the public sphere is also undergirded here, as illustrated with references to diversity and inclusivity. The third chapter discusses a number of methodological approaches to public history. These are drawn from both history in the narrow sense as well as the arts and humanities more generally, and include material culture, visual, sound, oral, and living history. Lücke und Zündorf thus focus on a range of paradigmatic approaches to public history that have also been the subject of much international discussion. The many connections they draw between research and teaching, in addition to historical practice and public-facing activities, make abundantly clear the interdisciplinarity inherent to the work of public historians. The role of various textual and audio-visual (digital) media in the construction of historical authenticity is the subject of the fourth chapter. Here Lücke again turns explicitly to the contrasting roles public historians (can) play: as recipients, as producers, and/or as analysts.

In the two final chapters, there is a greater focus on public history's practical aspects: the fifth chapter discusses museums and monuments as key focal points of strategies for the culture of history and memory. Finally, chapter six turns to the teaching of public history in universities. Here, Lücke and Zündorf stress the linkage of theory and practice constitutive of public history – not least in the context of master's theses, which (should) include both historical analyses and project-based practical components. The potential professional fields available to public historians and the ethical aspects of historical work (both generally and as part of commissioned history), as discussed through an international lens by Antoon de Baets,<sup>1</sup> are also briefly mentioned here. What is not clear,

<sup>1</sup> Antoon de Baets, *Responsible History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Antoon de Baets, *Crimes against History* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

however, is whether the career opportunities sketched out apply to all historians and, consequently, what qualifications public historians in Germany typically have in comparison to specialists from other areas of the historical sciences.

Overall, the various chapters provide a good introduction to the substance, methods, and structures of German Public History. In terms of its beginning professionalization, they also list key actors, institutions, places of study, and degree courses as well as journals and publication series. Lücke und Zündorf have thankfully structured their introduction so as to provide not only students of public history with a good overview of the field, but also practitioners and experts in other areas of the arts and humanities. These results from the book's well-thought-out didactic structure: each individual chapter's concise and informative subsection also includes lists of relevant literature.

Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf should be congratulated for producing the first single-volume introduction to Public History in the German language. They have succeeded in taking a large step towards achieving a conceptual and substantive consensus and a foundational curriculum based on an identifiable methodology. Their collection and (re)formulation of core principles of public

history is also a contribution to the necessary professionalization of the discipline in Germany.

Two areas that should prove particularly accessible to an international readership are those that concern practical work relating to museums and monuments, which are considered core concerns of public history around the world. Accounting Lücke and Zündorf's work in relation to English-language equivalents published in recent years,<sup>2</sup> however, demonstrates that Germany's personal and institutional settings, as well as Germany's informal didactic museological and memorial learning contexts, differ significantly from that of other countries. The book also shows that "participation" and "shared authority" (still) have less significance for German public history, whose central elements Lücke and Zündorf identify with good reason as "history *in the* public sphere and *for the* public" (9) and not explicitly history *by* or *with the* public. The reasons for this may also be partially found in the history and structure of German historical scholarship: while, in the English-speaking world, those aspects of public history that are closest to the people often take the form of community history projects, in Germany, regional and state history projects associated with universities are more common. Yet, it is precisely this kind of path-dependence that leads us to reflect again on our own understanding of public history.

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<sup>2</sup> Faye Sayer, *Public History. A Practical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Thomas Cauvin, *Public History. A Textbook of Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Cherstin M. Lyon, Elisabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum, *Introduction to Public History. Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences* (Latham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2017).