

The birth of a new discipline of the past? Public History in Italy

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This essay has been published ten years after *Ricerche Storiche's* special issue on *Media and History* coordinated by Francesco Mineccia and Luigi Tomassini (2009) which engaged, for the first time in Italy, with Public History as a field of practices. It discusses the origins and development of public history in Italy. Public history in the Peninsula has its roots in historical institutions born in the 19th century and in the post WW2 first Italian Republic. The concept of a "public use of history" (1993), the important role played by memory issues in post-war society, the birth of public archaeology (2015) before public history, and the emergence of history festivals in the new millennium are all important moments currently shaping the history of the field which are dealt with in this essay. The foundation of the "Italian Association of Public History" (AIPH) in 2016-2017, and the promotion of an Italian Public History Manifesto (2018) together with the creation of Public History masters at universities, are all concrete signs of a vital development of the field in the country.

IT

Questo saggio esce dieci anni dopo il numero speciale di *Ricerche Storiche* coordinato da Francesco Mineccia e Luigi Tomassini e dedicato a *Media e Storia*, (2009) un numero che, per la prima volta in Italia, ha discusso della disciplina della Public History e delle sue pratiche. Esso intende riflettere sulle origini e lo sviluppo della public history in Italia. La public history nella penisola affonda le sue radici nelle istituzioni storiche nate nel XIX secolo e nella prima Repubblica dopo la seconda guerra mondiale. Il concetto di "uso pubblico della storia" (1993), l'importante ruolo svolto dai problemi di memoria nella società del dopoguerra, la nascita dell'archeologia pubblica (2015) prima della storia pubblica, l'emergere di festival storici nel nuovo millennio sono tutti importanti momenti che modellano la storia della disciplina che sono trattati in questo saggio. La fondazione dell'Associazione italiana di public history (AIPH) nel 2016-2017 e la promozione di un manifesto della public history italiana (2018) insieme alla creazione di master di storia pubblica nelle università, sono tutti segni concreti di uno

sviluppo vitale del campo nel paese.

Introduction

The discipline of Public History aims at sharing a "public sense" of history for a better society, publicly aware of its past. This can be done through a non-trivial reflection on how to work with the past in museums, exhibitions, historic parks, archives, libraries, archaeological sites, re-enactments and commemorations or through all media outlets. Like in other countries, Public History in Italy has followed its own path and methods. The decentralized organization of Italian cultural institutions and their contact with local communities has been evident for many years. One of the most important nationwide industries, cultural tourism, is concerned with the Italian past and heritage. The presence of the past in cultural and archaeological heritage is ubiquitous in the country, even in small villages, towns, and through historical landscapes. Local communities feel heritage is about their own identity and memory.

Moreover, the political and instrumental use of the past has strong roots embedded in the cultural policies and in the country's Republican party system, especially in regards to the memory of World War II, the resistance and the civil war. In Republican Italy, since the end of the War, there have been disputes about who has "controlled" the past and its memory and who has owned the past in public. Local proto-public history practices and projects engaged with the way this country has looked at its past and at times, difficult memories, through the activities of cultural institutions who have developed a territorial and community-based approach to history.

This paper aims at offering an overview of this Italian path to what North America called in the 70s, Public History. It provides the reader with some highlights of autochthonous characteristics of how the past has been used, consumed, narrated and communicated and, in general, dealt with in the public sphere in Italy in the last decades. Concepts and practices of the discipline have existed long before the term "public history" entered public discussions –even in academic contexts- only in very recent years. This is why, defining public history is not a goal here because I tried to do so in a previous essay in *Ricerche Storiche*, exactly ten years ago, and want to adopt here the metaphoric definition introduced by Marcello Ravveduto, who teaches Public and Digital History at the University of Salerno: public history is an *archipelago*. History in public and with the public is conducted differently in many islands in this Italian archipelago. Therefore, the discipline could be compared to *digital humanities*, often called by its practitioners, a "big tent", or an "umbrella field" which includes different sub-disciplines, like, for instance, digital history or digital public history that concerns us most.

Both historians and cultural institutions are curious about the field today and, in general, Italians are amenable to discussing and importing concepts

and disciplines from other countries, and adapting them to local realities. Thus, the fact that the field was originally concerned with applied history practices in public and had been first developed in Anglo-Saxon countries, especially the USA, did not raise any major controversy. Local institutions, archives, libraries, museums were prepared to adopt the name of a field which offered a context to what they already practiced and, in an interdisciplinary way, without the sole lead of university history professors.

In a general overview of public history in Italy, the way that archival institutions, libraries, and especially history museums, have engaged with public history in recent years, should be an important part of the story. For example, the very animated discussion about the creation or not, of a museum for the history of fascism in the city of Predappio, Mussolini's birthplace, is an excellent example of the central role of museums in the Italian field of Public History.

Many Italians who practice public history in cultural institutions now feel they have always been part of the field and, a recently founded *Italian Association Of Public History* (AIPH, 2016) has reinforced this awareness. Since the foundation of the AIPH, Italians have engaged in fruitful discussions about the definition of the field itself, between heritage studies, memory studies, museum studies, oral and digital history, popular history and the communication of history through different media outlets/sources.

In order to acknowledge the existence of a specific path for an Italian style of public history, we must look at who these actors are that engaged in public practices with the past in Italy and, in which ways, different actors deal with national history and memory issues.

1. National paths for an International discipline

Each country follows a different path to public history and this happens in different periods. Italy is no exception. Michael Frisch wrote in an Italian academic journal in 2009 that "*It is inviting to dwell on these interesting differences, to observe the variations in public history as a sort of dependent variable, defined by the diversity of contexts and from the constellation of forces operating in the history of each nation and, therefore, in the public representation of it.*"

Italian public history has developed rapidly during the last ten years and, like in each specific country, in a very fragmented way. In Italy, public history focuses on the public historian's role, professional skills and communication practices in society. Indeed, different forms of narration of the past in Italy correspond to different media outlets and answer a diversified public demand for public storytelling. Popular history writing and novels are largely written by non professional historians and by journalists. These forms of historical narrative have been very significant especially surrounding the history of WW2. Popular history has reached a large audience of people

curious about their history. Furthermore, historical contexts is often been adopted when writing novels. History that could be communicated and narrated in a simpler and attractive way in the media, is a key formula which has forged post-war Italian popular culture with great success.

Today, the interconnection between history and the media has become an important branch of research and teaching at Italian universities, where master degrees in history communications flirt with the field of public history. Public history has also sprouted through the encounter between the study of different media outlets that are able to transmit and communicate the past even at RAI with *RAI Cultura* and *RAI Storia*, two channels part of national television broadcasts and in documentary festivals, like, for instance, the international *Festival dei Popoli* which has celebrated its 60th anniversary in Florence in 2019.

Doing public history in Italy today does not only mean communicating, teaching, or disseminating a certain type of history concretely applied to the problems debated in the public arena and hoping to reach a wider audience. It also means putting history in direct contact with local communities that coexist within the national space and with the evolution of their mentalities, collective memories, and sense of belonging in the global village and to shaping the study of their identities. It requires looking together with the people themselves, what it means to be an Italian today, a citizen made up of many different layers and senses of belonging, often full of contrasts and contradictions and diversified approaches to history and memories. A more prosaic approach to the field must also be mentioned, as the country is confronted with a scarcity of academic jobs for historians. Thus, Public history may become a new resource for cultural workers and traditional historians.

In Italy, 2009 is the year in which the words “public history”, referred to the North American discipline, were introduced in wider public and academic debates about the crisis of humanities and history in society. It is only more recently, in correspondence with the creation of the AIPH, that the country has recognized the field as being part of new epistemological developments in the humanities. This happened largely thanks to the activism of the AIPH, which has promoted the English words untranslated in the broader public debate and in the media. Such phrasing is now used widely outside a ghetto of enthusiasts and convinced apostles.

The AIPH Public History Manifesto, which we will say more about at the end of this essay, claims that “*the choice of the English term “Public History” is motivated by the explicit intention to refer to a vast international movement and to a discipline that has its origins in the late seventies in the Anglo-Saxon world. It also underlines the novelty of this professional proposal in our country, without the ambiguities that a literal translation in Italian of “storia pubblica” could have created, as it is close to the often-instrumental concept of the public use of history (“uso pubblico della*

storia”). The usage of these terms and their conceptual differences have evolved greatly in the last twenty years grounding an important theoretical part of what is today called “public history”.

Public history is a reaction against the isolated way some Italian academics conduct research and teach history in the so-called “Ivory Tower”, far away from the needs of the wider public. The severe criticisms of Christoph Dippert as to how contemporary history is studied in universities in Italy are recent (2015), and the consequent responses of Italian historians as well. However, the crisis of history in academic settings is a fact in Italy, a country in which, on one hand, politicians rewrite the past to support their own political agenda and play with memory issues and commemorations, and on another, historians are active political actors too. It is evident that Public history grew in the country through public debates about the past and a civic and political role played by historians and cultural institutions in communities. Parallel to the crisis of academic history, the role and future of historical narrative in Italian society has been challenged, in a country that constantly questions its own national path and identity but also suppresses history from the 2019 *maturità*, the high school final examination before entering university.

Academic historians lost their social role already in the '80s and so public historians should take the lead in bringing back a civic and public role of history in society. A major Italian historian like Giuseppe Galasso, who died recently, wrote that Italian historiography lost its universal impact on contemporary issues and its social role, during the Eighties when historians lost the capacity to engage directly and be protagonists of the culture of their times. Other social sciences were better able to interpret a present without “history”. Also in the '90s, digital history and public history practices started developing in conjunction with a broader discussion between practitioners about the role of the historian in Italian society. This is why the social role of historians that François Bedarida and Jean Stengers examined in the Nineties during an important Italian conference that I will mention later, is now eventually in the hands of every “charlatan” playing with the past, something Thelen and Rosenzweig have brilliantly shown. Rather hopefully today, this social role is also becoming a public historians' primary aim.

In 2014, Tommaso Detti -a contemporary historian, former president of the *Italian society for the study of contemporary history*, SISSCO-, wrote that history has to offer applied public goals and should be used in contemporaneity. The second aspect remains a more theoretical one in Italy, because of the still missing institutionalization of public history in university teaching programs as part of the broader discipline of history. Detti also stigmatised the lost social role of historians and the difficulty, for academic historians today, to engage with the wider public and make the past relevant in contemporary culture. Contemporaneity in Italy is made of different intertwined temporalities that define a specific Italian vision of the

past. Moreover, due to this convergence of all pasts towards the present, the importance of a "longue durée" time dimension in explaining contemporary issues, remains unaltered today.

2. Public use of history: an Italian brand for public history?

Sometimes differences between a public use of history and public history become subtle. History as a global and traditional discipline together with a social presence of the past in public which has been called "*uso pubblico della storia*" -"usage of history"- and in the '90s are, in this perspective, both complementary aspects of Italian public history practices. The discipline of public history supposes that public historians follow scientific historical methods in their practices, but, public history –even practised scientifically- may want to answer to public social and political needs in the present. Social, cultural, and political activism is an important part of public history which does not signify "inventing" the past. Public historians as activists "use" history to foster some ideas and causes and base their narrative on precise historical backgrounds, contexts, and explanations. Professional ethics plays a role here and, public activism with the past is not about fake or "bad history telling" but about using the past as a resource for explaining the meanings of the present.

Historians, for sure, but even more public historians, should be better aware of their capacity to dig deeply into the past and explain contemporary issues by answering Serge Gruzinski's question "*l'histoire pour quoi faire*"? "Public history" contemporizes all pasts by applying them to today's issues for which the knowledge of history is beneficial. Italian public history makes public the whole Anthropocene (also archaeology and ancient history) and connects it to our present. Already during World War I, Benedetto Croce wrote something that has since been quoted many times namely that "*only an interest in the present life can move us to investigate a fact of the past. Every true history is contemporary history*".

During a conference organised in Rome in 1993 by the IRSIFAR (*Roman Institute for the History of Italy from Fascism to the Resistance*), Nicola Gallerano explained how the public use of history (*uso pubblico della storia*) had different meanings. Gallerano's insight was to argue that history was used and communicated in the media, within cultural institutions and in public places, and that, to different media sources, corresponded different forms of narratives. This vision was a public history interpretation of the use of history in public; it was not about a politically biased and instrumental version of the discipline. In the early '90s, such a statement in a public conference -and in public writings afterwards-, was an important premise for the development of the discipline in Italy.

In 1995, Chiara Ottaviano, one of the first independent Italian public historians, co-manager together with the media historian, Peppino Ortoleva,

of *Cliomedia Officina*, a company founded in 1985 (she became the only CEO in 1999) dealing with history, wrote an essay about the *public use of history*, following Gallerano's interpretation of the concept. Thinking about her own experience, she focused more on who the practitioners were and what they were doing with the past when producing history from below and using mass media: *"overseas the expression of public history... did not generally involve ideological or field choices, even though it referred to the extra-academic world and the mass media. On the contrary, it is correct to remember that the [role] of public historian was discussed more than public history."* In Italy, who were these practitioners? They were professional historians able to listen to a large public demand for the past and capable of answering the many public needs for a history from below. A public historian was an interpreter of the past creating historical narratives and answering a public demand for history through different media outlets.

As an example of this kind of solidity and permanence of Gallerano's concept in Italy, I can also quote a personal experience. In an essay written in a book coordinated with French historian Philippe Rygiel in 2005, I translated Gallerano's concept in French as *"usage public de l'histoire"*, when engaging with history and memory issues on the Italian web. This was, at that time, and in absence of a "public history" discipline in Italy, the way we all used to talk about public representations of the past in the media.

The use/abuse of history for instrumental and political purposes in the present, is not what professional public historians should do and is stigmatized in the Italian Public History Manifesto which mentions that a public historian should *"contrast the "abuses of history", meant as the practices of mystification of the past to manipulate public opinion"*. In public, everyone can use and bend history to their own interests. The actors here are both producers and consumers of history. They may represent a specific community aimed at fostering a own history in public or, on the contrary, and like memory fighters, popular storytellers or political actors, they may play with history in public and build their own identity vision of the past that requires a different history and collective memory in the present.

Gallerano's concept has not always been interpreted correctly starting in the mid Nineties of the last century. The "public use of history", is an ambivalent concept, not always about searching for the truth in making history and then, about choosing different ways to share this knowledge with the public. Sometimes it corresponded much more with an abuse of history for supporting causes, ideologies, specific memories or contemporary political purposes. This is why, still in 2017, Lorenzo Bertucelli, director for the first Italian Public History Master, and one of the first historians to question the specific Italian path to public history, wrote that it was extremely important to *"be able to draw a clear boundary between the public / political use of history and the Public History approach; it appears as a necessary preliminary requirement to disseminate and root the discipline in our*

country”.

Gallerano's genuine interpretation of the *public use of history* was nonetheless how the North American and British concept of Public History was “translated” and interpreted in Italy in the early Nineties.

3. Public History Conferences: reinventing social roles for historians from inside the profession.

In 1996, an important international conference took place at the European University Institute's History Department in Florence on the *Responsibility of Historians*. This conference had been organized by the recently founded (1992) contemporary history association, SISSCO, still very active today in supporting academic historians and their social role. Some protagonists of public history discussions today, were already present during that conference. They raised questions, still debated today, about the public use of history through different media outlets by non-historians. This conference took place only a year after the publication of Gallerano's book on the public use of history, and Anna Rossi Doria, a historian of women, recalled his figure because he had died prematurely some weeks before. She stressed the fact that, in Italy, Gallerano had been the first historian interested in the public use of history and in the social responsibility of the profession. In doing so, Rossi Doria wanted to reconnect the work of Gallerano to the purposes of the conference and to its international guests.

The Belgian historian Jean Stengers, one of the most “public” contemporary historians at that time in Belgium, was the author of essays about the social role of historians. Furthermore, François Bédarida, founder and director of the *Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent* (IHTP) in France edited a book about the social responsibility of historians in 1994. In this case, Bédarida was influenced by meeting the American pioneer Wesley Johnson in the early Eighties. Stenger's theoretical thoughts on the social responsibility of historians, mentions four different responsibilities, all necessary parts of the ethics of the historian's profession. One of these, the social responsibility, is very difficult to define, explained Stengers during the conference: “*Responsibilities must necessarily [. . .], when dealing with the activity of the historian, be used in the plural. I see -wrote Stengers, four major types of responsibility, quite different from each other: penal liability, civil liability (and "penal" and "civil" are here legal terms that have a strict meaning) then, no doubt more important, but less likely to be strictly defined, what I will call moral responsibility, and social responsibility, the latter inseparable from the very profession that the historian practices.*” “Historians must do their job as a historian”, but they must also participate in the *polis* and become protagonists of the culture of their time, continued Stengers. The first responsibility touches on professional ethics, the second, the role of the historian in society and the use that society makes of history and of the

professional work of historians. Placing themselves at the service of the government, the nation or an ideology, historians put a strain on their ethics and often create a "historical bad", which today could even help in creating fake narratives. Instead, historians that do their job scientifically well, produce "truthful and critical work". Participants agreed that historians do not have the monopoly of the social use of history, but that they must at least be honest in interpreting their professional role in public.

Anticipating discussions that involve the field of public history, this conference acknowledged the fact that novelists, theatre actors, film directors, journalists, television men, theatre actors, also narrate history, without being professional historians. Invited to the conference was the journalist, historian and fiction writer Arrigo Petacco, who had a lot of popular success in the '80s and '90s, and argued that many of the topics he covered in his books corresponded to the needs of the market. He wanted to answer a public demand for history, using popular forms of narration. At this point, participants asked whether it was right also for a historian, to bargain one's professional and academic way of writing essays for a more popular narrative of the past due to such a wider public demand. If this was allowed, how could academic historians then avoid losing their "scientific" aura that mattered in public? Historians can avoid becoming public: if academic historians were not to engage in popular storytelling in public because this narrative would clash against their academic and ethical background, such storytelling would become Mr. Everyone's business. With anyone telling stories about the past, the construction of a collective memory based on sound history would not be possible any more, argued oral historian Luisa Passerini. Historians should engage with wider publics.

In 2013, Marcello Ravveduto, historian of Italian organized crime, promoted a panel about *Public History approaches in Italy*, continuing the legacy of what had been organized by the SISCO already in 1996, about the role of historians in society. Ravveduto also participated in NCPH conferences in Indianapolis in 2017 and in Las Vegas in 2018. During his participation in these conferences, Ravveduto asked himself which kind of public history paradigm was born during the so-called 2nd Italian Republic (1992) and, where public debates about the past and memory, were especially alive and conflictual in the country. He correctly mentioned that this "battlefield" of memory was to be found in a never-ending public fight over controlling public and collective memories especially through the usage of toponymy and onomastic. *"Memory is the privileged field of action of public history [...]. The memory of the victims of the mafias, of terrorism, of the Shoah, of the foibe (sinkholes), of natural disasters, at work and on duty, has given rise to a "geography of memory" founded on renewed "identity infrastructures": historical parks, museum organizations, calendars holidays, civil rituals, institutional ceremonies, place names etc. An Italian Public History should set itself the goal of rebalancing the relationship between*

history and memory, examining the memory of the past with critical methods.

The very first Italian conference dedicated entirely to public history, *Public History: a new way of approaching history*, was held only in 2014, organised by two Ca' Foscari University professors in Venice, an historian of Ottoman and Turkish history, Maria Pia Donati, recently deceased, and a German cultural historian, Rolf Petri. This seminar looked at the shift towards new forms of history narrative proposed by academic historians becoming public historians; something done in public places by Emilio Franzina, historian of the Veneto region and a musical storyteller in public spaces, who spoke about his personal experience on stage. Similar experiences were described at the conference, keeping in mind that public historians like Franzina, always took care of the craft of historians, when going public, even when performing their shows. *"For example, wrote Maria Pia Donati after the workshop, nowadays history documentaries in television programs, often give the viewer only certainties and powerful images, while the difference between facts and hypotheses should also be highlighted"*.

And she recognized that today there is *"the need for historians to open up to other experiences, without forgetting their professionalism, and even in environments such as folklore, tourism, novels, popular history, the web or theatrical representations, usually left to improvisation, enthusiasm and approximation. It is not a question of undergoing a commodification of the discipline, which has also become a consumer good, but of actively proposing to dominate and direct the changes that are now inevitably taking place, and placing scientific stakes in a discourse of which many take possession without possessing the theoretical bases for it."*

4. Public history institutions in local communities

Local historical associations and institutions nowadays understand that, retrospectively, their activities with the past and for local audiences have always been, in a way, about public history. Already in the 19th century, public or private cultural and historical associations served their public and communities and interacted with them. One of the main paths that Italian historians chose to engage with public history practices has been through homeland local historical institutions. After WW2 and especially in the '80s and '90s and the new Millennium, such a capillary presence of cultural institutions which are peculiar to this country's history, fostered public history practices and projects

Let us take, for example, the case of the *Deputazione di Storia Patria* -homeland history deputation- which was founded in 1833 in Turin in the Reign of Piedmont. Homeland deputations were born in different pre-Risorgimento states. Their role was to publish documents relating to the history of the different states. Today, homeland history institutions are still

active in Italy and are maintained or subsidized by the state with a special statute regulating them. They depend on the *Giunta Centrale per gli Studi Storici* (National Historical Council). They edit primary sources selected from their Historical Archives and publish historical research, newsletters, and memoirs. Their activity is mainly dedicated to the publication of books and documents and they sometimes also maintain libraries and archives. Still active institutions today, they organise public activities like local scientific conferences. Public history activities are not contemplated although such historical agencies are concerned with the local and national political use of history. Very recently, the *Deputazione Napoletana di Storia Patria* wrote a communication against the political use of the past, a neo-Borbonic revisionist view of the history of the *Risorgimento*.

On the 19th of April 1949, in Milan, Ferruccio Parri, the leader of the resistance movement against Nazi-fascism in Italy during the years of the civil war (1943-1945), founded the *Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia* (INSMLI, National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy). Both in the post-war era and today, 70 years after its creation, the INSMLI, now called the *National Institute "Ferruccio Parri"*, became the head of a network of over 60 historical institutes scattered throughout national territory and engaged with local communities about the past. The "Parri" interacts with universities, schools, and their teachers reaching both a national audience and local urban public audiences. It started practising public history at a time when nobody was yet mentioning the name of the discipline. Dozens of people are now working for these institutions dedicated to contemporary history. Thanks to their commitment, public history projects launched within local communities are based on original research and important archives. Today, they digitize primary sources and organise collective digital projects based on their own archival and bibliographic materials like for instance the *last letters from death row inmates and deportees of the Italian Resistance*, or the *Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres* among many others. These digital public history projects were made possible, because the INSMLI network is active in historical research and in local and regional educational training about contemporary history. The Parri institute network participates in and organises public commemorations on the liberation war (1943-1945) and publishes different types of materials derived from their activities, from academic books and essays in journals, to popular blogs. The INSMLI network is an applied public history institution, which communicate contemporary history through different media outlets and to different audiences, combining sound research and teaching activities with civil commitment and public participation.

5. Public History Festivals: An Original Italian Way to Public History

A very popular Italian public history practice that met directly with the presence of a large public in the new Millennium is the important presence of local history festivals. What happens at Italian public festivals is one of the most popular forms of Italian Public History, the communication of history to a wider public by academic historians outside the boundaries of universities.

In 2017, Michael Frisch, in his keynote for the first conference of the Italian public history Association (AIPH), said that each country history was going public in its own way and due to national contexts, *“my impression is that in Italy, public festivals and their audiences, rather than fixed institutions and their presentations, have occupied the center of public history far more than is the case elsewhere. This brings into play all the complex tensions characterizing Italian politics, culture, and history.”*

Italian public festivals are further evidence that there is not one cultural centre in Italy, but, rather, a capillary network of decentralized regional, local and urban communities in which many territorial cultural institutions work with different historical periods and for local publics. Academic historians also engaged with these wider public and local communities through their direct involvement in history festivals. As protagonists of these forms of history telling in public places, they have to learn how to speak to hundreds of spectators and capture the attention of the public. Historians going public at festivals had to reinvent their communications skills. They created new forms of history narratives for different audiences, maintaining a high academic standard. Such a very peculiar form of history narrative for the public became extremely popular in the country in the new millennium. It testifies the capacity of some academic historians to go public and contrast in this way, the crisis of professional history. Participation at festivals reaffirmed their social role and, in parallel, provided an answer to the “need” for good storytelling expressed by the public. In Italy today, public lectures based on a better communication of well-built research, are one of the most popular ways used by academic historians to address different publics, although such a one-sided communication does not often consider direct public participation.

The first Italian historian, to reflect on the role and importance of History Festivals as a public and popular phenomena, was Elisabetta Vezzosi, in 2009 when she coordinated a roundtable for the journal *Contemporanea*. She questioned the format of festivals, a place where academic history met the public history agenda and public history communicative methods. *“In Italy the festivals of history and the very crowded historians' public lessons dedicated to students and citizens, are part of a new course in the cultural policies of many local administrations and not only. [...] As historians, we all do research, analyse, interpret our sources, and communicate the results. If the primary difference between public and academic history is the type of communication we try to develop, the type of audience we try to reach and the type of products we try to convey, the history festivals and their success*

have helped to create more historical sensitivity, new ways of feeling, innovation in discursive practices [...]?" Marco de Niccolò another historian who participated at the roundtable expressed his fear that academic historians would not maintain any relevance in the public space and at festivals if not through their arduous and precise research in archives and libraries, the necessary premise to going public. *"It is necessary to convey through the festivals the awareness that the narratives that the public can enjoy, arises from a long and laborious research that begins in other public places, silent but equally important. Because only from that silence, proposals arise based on scientific rigor. [...] If these beliefs spread gradually in a large and non-specialized public, history festivals would have reached an important goal."*

One of the first festival, born in 2001 in San Mauro Pascoli, was *Processo alla Storia* (History on trial). It publicly discusses the role of illustrious characters from the Romagna region and public participation has been organized as the public issues the verdict. One of the most established festival takes place annually in Bologna where, from 2003, the *Festa internazionale della storia* is celebrated. In Gorizia, the annual festival *èStoria* was launched in 2005. In Genova, *La Storia in Piazza* (History in the public square), began its activities in 2010. In Forlì, in 2014, a new festival focused on the *History of the 20th century*. The newest addition to this list is *Lezioni di Storia Festival*, a second Italian festival organized in Southern Italy, after the International Public History festival organized in Salento, that took place in Naples, in 2019. In addition to classic popular lectures and encounters with renowned historians, the show reached the city of Naples' and its public spaces and monuments that were "interpreted" by using a downloadable free digital APP. This digital promotion of Neapolitan cultural heritage in urban spaces allows for the listening to the stories of some important historical figures in front of their statues. The app geo-location system indicates if someone is passing next to a "talking statue".

Giuseppe Laterza, the publisher who organizes *Lezioni di Storia*, is not new to public history events and public lectures; he started organizing public lessons in 2006, initially on the history of Rome. Laterza is, de facto, a "public historian". He co-creates the shows in which, the personality of a historian, and the lesson taught, remain central elements. Nevertheless, he organizes and chooses the content and the different chapters in which the lesson is divided; he discusses the content of a lesson with historians and the way in which the narration should be presented, introduced, illustrated, and staged in a big auditorium. Laterza does publicize the event too and looks for public and private sponsors. One of the most important Italian "publishers" is indeed, involved in the co-creation of the show in which it shares his authority and applies a well-known principle of public history methods. Academic historians' frontal narration becomes a public history event. In these settings, an academic historian is confronted, maybe for the

first time in her/his career, with a large unidentified public, (sometimes 4.000 attendees), that he/she must conquer to his talk. “*With [historians], writes Laterza, we do a publishing job not different than for books [...]. It is this value added that - I believe - the public of the lessons appreciates, of course together with the scientific and communicative quality of the historians.*” “This is why, a public lesson “*does not mean that the narrative aspect couldn’t be combined with a more general historical interpretation, able to make people reflect, to raise doubts, to question widespread beliefs.*”

Francesco Catastini, who organized cultural and public history shows in Italy, wrote: “*history festivals represent a place [. . .] where you can meet consolidated experiences of spectacularizing history, namely theatre, music, cinema and historians with the public.*” Catastini thinks that Italian festivals represent a show with much more content than just high-level academic lessons for a large audience of participants in public squares or theatres, despite a true renewal of historians’ public narrative and of their communication skills: it is about building a complex public history event for the public.

6. Public History in academic journals

Academic journals were heavily influenced by the digital revolution and by a growing open access to different publics in the last twenty years. They represent another context in which public history has been discussed in Italy in the new millennium with them being either closed to open public access or free of charge for the readers. Academic journals like *Passato e Presente*, already in the '80s, and other journals in the new millennium like *Storia e Problemi Contemporanei* in 2002, confronted the ways in which history was used in different media outlets, from TV broadcasting to the web.

In 2009, Luigi Tomassini and Francesco Mineccia curated a monographic issue of the journal *Ricerche Storiche* entirely dedicated to *Media and History*. Public Archaeology and Public History were tackled in two different essays. For the first time in Italy, *Public History* was mentioned in the title of an academic essay. Today *Ricerche Storiche* is very much engaged with public history issues and also publishes essays in English like the ones written by oral and public historians Michael Frisch and Linda Shopes, on shared authority and on the interaction between oral and public history, or with a monograph issue dedicated to Public History in Greece.

But it was only in 2011, that the first monographic issue of the journal, *Memoria e Ricerca*, mentioned in its main title, the words public history. *Public History, national practices and global identity*, was entirely dedicated to the field of Public History and examples of continental European Public History practices announcing the foundation of an *International Federation for Public History*. The purpose of this journal issue has been to compare some Public History works in continental Europe with Anglo-Saxons’ ones

and those of the United States, the most ancient national disciplinary tradition in the field. The whole issue has been constructed as an international dialogue, and the introductory essay recorded some important discussions that took place in Pensacola, between American public historians and European ones during the 2011 annual North American NCPH conference, about the ambiguous and contested role of monuments in local communities and, in this case, confederate monuments. The concept of *digital public history* has been used in that same issue, and for the first time in Italy, in an essay written by Marie-Pierre Besnard about a 3D virtual reconstruction of the church of Notre-Dame de Saint-Lô, destroyed in 1944 after the Battle of Normandy.

Journals are deeply intertwined with academic activities. History essays in peer reviewed academic journals are a symbol of a traditional form of publication. Although today, new open access and bottom up journals have adopted the same peer reviewing processes, and proliferated on the web. We have already quoted two important journals' issues with a paywall like *Ricerche Storiche* and *Memoria e Ricerca*, but other journals, many in open access and adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, have contributed to the discussion about Public History and its practices in the Peninsula. The role of *Il Capitale Culturale*, *Studies on the value of cultural heritage* and *Economia della Cultura* should also be mentioned in promoting the economic and social sustainability of cultural heritage. It would be impossible to mention all public history related essays which were published, but we think it is important to, at least, quote old and new journals which led to discussions, project descriptions, reviews, interviews and source publications about public history, public history in the media, and, in general, to discussing public history projects. In a list of digital open access journals which publishes public history related essays, we could cite *Officina della Storia*, *Diacronie*, *Clionet*, *rivista di public history*, *Novecento.org*, *Storicamente*, *Storia e Futuro*, *E-Review*, and *Archeostorie*, *Journal of Public Archaeology*. Open access journals complete themore traditional historiographical publications in printed academic journals (eventually available also online) like *Quaderni Storici*, *Italia Contemporanea*, *Zapruder*, *Contemporanea* and *Historia Magistra*. This last journal commented on the birth of the *International Federation of Public History*. These journals contributed to the epistemological discussion on public history using its English term in essays written mainly in Italian. And such an English concept – that of public history- was also adopted in 2017 by the SBN, the national bibliographic system, to describe the field but hasn't yet been used until now in order to qualify public history works with this subject keyword.

7. Public, Applied and Micro History: theory and practice of an Italian Public History

Since the concept of Public History has been introduced in public and academic discussion in Italy, a critical reflection about its epistemology came from Angelo Torre in 2015, again in a special issue of a journal, *Quaderni Storici*. Torre was convinced that Italian public history, but mainly all international public history, lacked clear theoretical reflections on its methodology and had not yet confronted the difficult and delicate issue of what differentiates a public historian from an academic historian today. Two years later, Lorenzo Bertucelli, after launching the Public History master degree in Modena in 2015, reiterated Torre's criticism and spoke about some "*conceptual uncertainties and interpretative fragility*" of Italian public history as a discipline.

Torre proposed the terms "applied history" (*storia applicata*). Instead of insisting on a definition limited to a policy oriented activity through the knowledge of the past, he defined applied history as being about specific practices in public relating to the promotion of cultural heritage. He has made original insights into studying international developments of applied history in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Torre reconstructed the vicissitudes of applied history outside universities in the Anglo-Saxon world starting from the years before WWI with the work of the pioneer of applied history, Benjamin F. Shambaugh. The study of "cultural heritage"- close to the French concept of "*patrimoine*" –is central to the applied activity of historians outside the academy and, an alternative, according to Torre, to the one of public history, too vague and unidentified. Torre sees three dimensions for history outside the university: the history applied and used in politics following the long tradition of prince's councillors, a "public" history that answers historical questions outside the academy and, finally, the public dimension of cultural heritage.

In my view, notwithstanding this interpretation of applied history as the main concept for defining the field, the only concept capable of curbing the erosion of the critical and long-term explanatory power of history, is the one globally accepted, that of public history. Torre's distinctions conceptualize some approaches to applied history between others and are nevertheless artificial distinctions as far as the international field of public history is concerned. Public history is a "big tent" and offers a wide conceptual umbrella for many different practices –applied or not- as we mentioned at the beginning. All these practices find their place within the global dimension of public history, which in turn, forms an integral part of the historical sciences. Cultural heritage, its preservation and enhancement, and the narratives applied to it, are only one of the fields of public history and of the application of historical research in public and with the public. The conceptual nuances introduced by Torre, come directly from the epistemological debate that was initiated in America in the 1970s within the field of public history itself. It emphasizes the public management and the encounter with communities, two dimensions of cultural heritage. It

compares them to other public historians' activities that all fall within the scope of public history, sometimes also applied history, (the alternative name in the '70s for the discipline launched in California, by Wesley Johnson and Robert Kelley) when the policy oriented aspect of public history practices is more evident.

Furthermore, applied and/or public history in Italy, has its DNA embedded in a specific area of research and historiographical experimentation, that of micro-history and of oral history. A microhistory approach to history making through an interactive relationship between local cultures and socio-anthropological contexts has been central to history since the 1970s in Italy. Such a form of history making had been promoted by Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi when, at the end of the 1970s, public history was already blossoming at Ruskin College in Oxford and at the University of California, Santa Barbara. By using oral history sources and methods, these historians tested some more intimate ways to represent a local history that would also illustrate more global issues and processes. Adopting both an anthropological and a microhistory approach to local communities influenced the development of public history in Italy. It was this bottom-up interpretation, which renewed historical investigation into ways of studying the past through new interdisciplinary forms of explanations of the local. Stuart J. Woolf a contemporary historian, who taught for many years at Italian universities, wrote "*an obligatory practical consequence for micro-historians was to reduce the scale of research to local contexts, precisely defined by territory, family, profession, biography, text.*"

However, the scale of the analysis -the individual, the local- that characterized the scholarship of micro-historians in Italy was also influenced, in interpreting local communities' history, by the heuristic revolution led by Marc Bloch and the French historians of the School of the Annales. The historical profession had become "omnivorous", searching for any kind of traces of the past. Micro-historians and public historians were therefore using alternative primary sources that could better explain the place of the past within local contexts and populate a "history from below" with and for local communities. New generations of historians interpreted material sources, no longer basing their new historical narrative only on written documentation. Material evidence of the past that individuals, families, and groups have preserved and even displayed in their homes, in the streets, in local museums, and today on the Web engage with the past emotionally and add significantly to its interpretation. Furthermore, in the 1970s, Luisa Passerini, in her analysis of the self-perception of Turin's working-class community under fascism, as well as in her prosopography of the 1968 movement in Italy, created her own sources. She interviewed workers and collected the memories of her own generation. Making oral history is about interpreting feelings and individual memories, creating a collection of evidence that allows a better understanding of communities from below.

Likewise, Alessandro Portelli built interactive and interpretative “*glocal*” journeys into collective memories and the past, through the construction of oral history testimonies gathered in the community of steelworkers in Terni, Italy, and from the miners in Harlan County, Kentucky.

Another fundamental step in developing a broader epistemological reflection about public history in Italy, has been the launch of the first public history master degree at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in 2015 (4th edition of the course, during the academic year 2018-2019 and 2019-2020). The directors, Lorenzo Bertucelli, Paolo Bertella Farneti and Alfonso Botti, published in 2017 a first Italian book to discuss public history methods, goals and specific practices with each chapter written by a different author, many of which are collaborators of the master degree programme. If we include the monographic essay in *Memorie e Ricerche* in 2011 and Torre’s applied history reflections in 2015, these collected essays remain the most consistent and sophisticated reflections that Italy has produced on public history up to now and was presented during the 1st Annual Conference of the AIPH, in June 2017 at the university of Bologna in Ravenna, . The presentation was accompanied by a rap song, an original promotional video written by one of the editors of the book, Paolo Bertella Farnetti, which narrated in a popular way, the merits and specificity of Public History in Italy.

The book offers a reflection about the best practices in the discipline and what kind of key methodological elements in public history practices have derived from the traditional professional activity of historians. A reference to what Ludmila Jordanova convincingly stated in her book on *History in Practice*. In the book, Bertucelli’s essay is a primary attempt to offer a historiographical contribution to the history of public history in Italy. It tries to define the professional identity both of historians and of public historians, like Stefano Pivato and Marcello Flores sustained, writing a journal essay before the first AIPH annual meeting in June 2017. Bertucelli writes: “*To rooting public history in Italy, it is useful to clarify how Public History shares a methodological approach based on the awareness that history (the whole history) is a "cultural construction". [...] Thus, source, proof construction and knowledge, are the stages of the interpretative path of the historian and are the path that a public historian intends to follow together with his public, a way to tell "the whole story", precisely also the toolbox that has to be shared with the public and which shows how "history is built". Manfredi Scanagatta-who got his PH master’s in Modena-, thinks that “...It is necessary to affirm that the work of public historian has two levels interpenetrating one in each other: that of research and that of representation, both levels generate a creative action”.*

Finally, Ravveduto, who too collaborated to the master in Modena, sustains that “*Scientific history ... is part of the social system of history and, in many cases, has less visibility than public history created for non-experts’*

publics, an audience that barely notices the difference. Therefore, academic and public historians must work together leading the production and communication of "history making."

Public history practices, methods and narratives applied in society should remain firmly anchored to the professional activity of historians due to the importance of their traditional skills. In doing public history, these skills must transcend the limits of universities and be shared with the public.

8. Public Archaeology before public history: the birth of an Italian Association

Italy is a country where the past also belongs to the local communities that think cultural heritage must be enhanced, sustained and narrated publicly. In absence of adequate public funds and with a huge lack of staff, the enhancement of Italy's magnificent pasts (Etruscans, Romans, medieval cities, renaissance heritage, etc.) often benefit from the work of unpaid volunteers at cultural heritage sites. This lack of investment in its cultural assets is an enormous national contradiction because promoting Italian heritage would foster the national economy: UNESCO has classified Italy as being the first country in the world for the importance of its cultural heritage with 55 recognized sites in 2019 and more to come. This list does not include only material cultural heritage but also historical landscapes.

Due to the presence of such a valuable cultural heritage, it is not surprising that Public Archaeology, as a discipline, -a term introduced in Italy in 2009 by Chiara Bonacchi-, emerged in the Peninsula, even before public history. Public archaeology focuses on the defence and public fruition of prehistorical and historical heritage. Public archaeologists engage with local communities through fieldwork and by fostering a common public awareness of the value of local heritage. Public archaeology thus has a lot to do with Italian local history and local communities. Public archaeologists focus on valuing those places that represent Italian material heritage from different economic (even heritage as an economic commodity), social, political, and cultural perspectives. Therefore, public archaeology interprets Italian material heritage for their communities of belonging.

In 2012, archaeologist Guido Vannini organized the first national conference of Public Archaeology in Florence and, in 2015, Cinzia dal Maso and Francesco Ripanti published *Archeostorie*, an online handbook of archaeological practices. *Archeostorie's* motto is the *past belongs to all of us*. Archaeological sites, ancient and medieval heritage, are everywhere in Italy, and are sometimes "communicated" in close connection with heritage tourism industry and not only through living history events and re-enactments. Therefore, it is not very surprising that public archaeology, connected to local communities, has been discussed even before public history.

Archaeologists had already discussed ways to engage with the public in local communities but they did not create a specific public archaeology association and no other national meetings were organized after 2012 which, on the contrary, historians did. It was in 2015, in Jinan, China, during the *International Committee of Historical Sciences* conference that also hosted the IFPH annual conference that year, that the idea of founding an Italian national association of Public History emerged. The Italian association benefitted from its creation, of informal meetings in Jinan. After the 2010 Amsterdam CISH conference (*Commission Internationale des Sciences Historiques* CISH-ICHS), the *International Federation for Public History* (IFPH), a permanent internal commission of the CISH, was launched to support and promote a wide-ranging cultural program with the past on an international scale. Returning to the case of Italy, a common initiative of the *Central Council for Historical Studies* (*Giunta Centrale per gli Studi Storici*) -which decides about the Italian presence in the CISH-, together with the *International Federation for Public History*, resulted in the creation of a nine member provisional board committee, nominated by the presidents of the *Giunta* (Giardina) and of the IFPH (Noiret). This provisional board of the Italian Association of Public History (*Associazione Italiana di Public History, AIPH*) met for the first time in Rome, on the 29th January, 2016. It has always been the purpose of the *Giunta* to organize, bring together and coordinate history associations in order to foster all forms of homeland history (“*storia patria*”).

Andrea Giardina, president of the *Giunta* and of the CISH since 2015, author of a *Worldwide History of Italy*, and a historian of ancient Rome at the *Scuola Normale Superiore* in Pisa, wanted to foster a better public knowledge of history and a social commitment for historians. Thanks to his support, the first AIPH constituent meeting made of the nine components of the provisional board and of eighteenth delegates was held at the *Giunta* headquarter in Rome, on the 21st June 2016. One peculiarity of Italian public history should be stressed here: the discipline is practiced by archaeologists, but also by historians who study all historical periods, from ancient history, to medieval, early modern and contemporary history. This is why delegates represented all Italian historical societies (Women, Urban, Work, Ancient History, Medieval History, Modern History and Contemporary History), professional associations (Museums, Archives and Libraries), two master's degrees (Modena and Bologna), a *Museum for the History of 20th Century in Italy* (M9), the association of medieval archaeologists, and the *Parri National Institute*. Other associations promoting the study of the past, like the oral history association, digital humanities association, the association for photography, were also present. The creation of a consultative body, the AIPH Scientific Committee, regrouping these eighteenth representatives and chaired by the president of the *Giunta Centrale* for the duration of his mandate, reinforced, in the bylaws, the

interdisciplinary architecture of the new association.

This important consultative body, helps to consolidate the representativeness of the Italian public history association, its national professional network and its transdisciplinary profile. It becomes important during the annual conference fostering panels presented by very different professional practitioners and from historians from ancient history to contemporary history. The goal of such a professional eclectic and interdisciplinary recruitment, is to have all professions that deal with the past, including their representative bodies, become members of the AIPH and promote Public History in Italy.

Once the official candidatures publicly presented, all AIPH members had the possibility to elect the first Steering Committee the governing board of the association that replaced the provisional committee. This happened during the 1st annual conference in Ravenna, in June 2017, at the AIPH general assembly.

From its official foundation in June 2017, the AIPH has promoted several activities sometimes coordinated with other associations. We may cite “For Public History” a lecture at the *Scuola Normale Superiore* in Pisa in May 2018 and two important regional workshops in 2018, one in Piedmont and one in Lombardy. A second annual conference *Let's put History to work*, was organized in June 2018 in Pisa and the 3rd AIPH conference *Invitation to History*, was held in June 2019 in Santa Maria Capua Vetere, at the University of Campania in the South of the country. A 4th AIPH conference will be held in June 2020 at M9, the *Museum of the 20th century Italian history* in Mestre.

Notwithstanding these successes between 2017 and 2019 –many people participated at all these events-, the AIPH felt already in 2018, the need to structure a reflection on how best to foster public history in Italian society and discuss the best practices of public history. The association decided to write an *Italian Public History Manifesto*. It was during the Piedmont Conference of Public History in spring 2018 that a draft of the manifesto was discussed publicly for the first time.

9. The Italian Manifesto of Public History: history is a social necessity

The social role of historians as experts and potential influencers of contemporary debates is challenged today, and not only in Italy. In 2018, the Italian Association of Public History (AIPH) felt the need for a Manifesto explaining why and how history should be public, based on public historians' critical and informed knowledge of the past.

Such a crisis is discussed in a pamphlet written in 2015 by Jo Guldi and David Armitage that has been widely commented on worldwide, translated and commented on in Italy too. Armitage and Guldi ask historians to move on, adapt their methods and skills to fight for a well-recognized and more

effective public role: one that they have lost, entrenched as they are in their academic certainties and petty low range historiography, and trapped in a dialogue with few peers, ignored by the wider public. The History Manifesto denounces the short-termism of historical research today and the lack of “longue durée”. The authors asked themselves “*why is history –especially long-term history–so essential to understanding the multiple pasts which gave rise to our conflicted present?*” They have an important cause to fight for “*the History Manifesto is a call to arms to historians and everyone interested in the role of history in contemporary society*”.

Public History and Digital Humanities/history are, partially, an answer to the identity crisis of the humanities and of history. New or renewed methods, and even more so, a brand-new discipline, are effectively addressing the digital turn that has deeply affected our societies. Indeed, Digital History overhauls the field of history, revamping traditional ways of dealing with archives and producing academic scholarship, and digital public history integrates the role of the public into the virtual realm and web practices and projects. Historians should take note of these global transformations in their discipline and raise their voices vigorously worldwide. This is what *The History Manifesto* attempted to say, aiming at a global mobilization of the profession.

Due to the digital context framing Armitage and Guldi’s reflections, the *Manifeste des Digital Humanities* discussed collectively and launched during THATCamp Paris in 2010, must also be mentioned as a significant declaration that considers what has changed in the Humanities following the digital turn. The “Manifeste” has many things to do with the *History Manifesto*’s aims, issued four years later.

The digital turn (and the digital public turn) has deeply transformed public history practices and the way historians work with archives, produce knowledge about the past and communicate such knowledge to and with the public. These were not direct premises for an Italian Manifesto because the History Manifesto remained blind towards the many settings in which public historians are working outside universities and influencing the public sphere and public debates about the past today. Nevertheless, the aims of the Italian Public History Manifesto are in a way similar to some of the main findings of the *History Manifesto*.

The Manifesto states that public historians should take the lead in bringing back the civic and public role of history in society. “Public history” contemporizes all pasts in Italy and these different pasts should serve to understand today’s issues for which the knowledge of history is a benefit. The Manifesto of Italian public history asserts that the whole Anthropocene (also archaeology and ancient history) is about public history and connects it to our present. Benedetto Croce’s sentence, written during World War One, a phrase, that has been quoted many times since, is namely that “*only an interest in the present life can move us to investigate a fact of the past.*”

Every true history is contemporary history". But the use/abuse of history for instrumental and political purposes as we have said earlier, is not what professional public historians should do and is stigmatized in the AIPH Italian Public History Manifesto which mentions that public historians should "contrast the "abuses of history", meant as the practices of mystification of the past to manipulate public opinion".

Publically for the first time, a first draft of the Italian Public History Manifesto, which had been written by the members of the Steering Committee of the AIPH, was presented and discussed during the regional Public History conference in Piedmont, held at the *Polo del Novecento* (Pole of the 20th Century) on May 7, 2018. Following Turin, the draft has been further questioned by members of the association in the AIPH mailing list and Facebook page, and during the 2nd AIPH Conference Annual Assembly in Pisa, on June 14, 2018. The AIPH published a translation of the Manifesto's final text that incorporated some of the comments received. A topic model (tag cloud) of the Italian manifesto –with a visual organization of keywords and some addition of important key ones- has been generated using Stéfán Sinclair and Geoffrey Rockwell *Voyant-Tools* software. The manifesto's tag cloud, and its keywords, displayed a better visual way to "reveal", summarize and communicate its content. The adopted keywords illustrate the specific understanding and interpretation of the large variety of professional practices within the field of Public History that are present in the Peninsula. Even more so, these words synthesize all the main issues that are discussed between Italian practitioners and, as a consequence, inside the Association. It illustrates the structure of a *Manifesto* that has been discussed, and rewritten, for their own professional cause, by Italian geographers in November 2018, during their own association's assembly. Geographers are also confronted with a social and academic crisis of their discipline. They wanted to write their own *Public Geography Manifesto* in an open way like public historians did in previous months.

The AIPH Italian Manifesto opens by saying that public history wants to generate a public sense of history because, if the past is everywhere, history that makes sense of the past is often absent from public discourses: our societies increasingly deal with memory issues but forget the mediation of historians in revealing the past through their construction of history. Public Historians, as mediators of the past with and for the public, foster the presence of history in many settings in the Peninsula and contribute to elaborating collective memories through the knowledge of history.

The AIPH manifesto explores about the complexity of the field and the difficulty to structure what public history means in an Italian context. *What is Public History* is the first question raised. The answer takes care of the specific Italian context, made up of experiences and practices we tried to illustrate in the previous paragraphs. The "Italianness" of the Manifesto illustrates how in the country, in the last decades, public history has acted

intensively to share a better public knowledge of the past capable of influencing public memories also “*related to research and communication outside academic circles,[...] with and for different audiences*”. That same paragraph acknowledges the efforts of the association in fostering teaching programs at universities and promotes them nationally in close connection with the MIUR, the *Ministry of Education, University and Research*. Specific skills and knowledge should be provided through “*a new university research and teaching area which aims at the formation of Public Historians*”.

Interdisciplinary professional skills defining the profession of a public historian should become part of a complementary degree after bachelor level (a three-year degree) connected with the many different bachelor diplomas in heritage studies, humanities, communication sciences and history departments. Few master's degrees, specific training and teaching activities, have been activated in history/humanities/heritage departments until 2019. In 2018, the University of Florence launched even a PhD in Public History, and public history courses are now being taught in the Peninsula. The Public History Manifesto wants to sensitize higher education decision makers, about the need for these specific university degrees in order to prepare Public Historians for different jobs in the public and private sectors. These jobs are mainly found in heritage tourism and in the many areas covered by the Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities (MIBAC), which is the Italian Government's ministry, responsible for the protection of culture, entertainment, and the conservation of artistic and cultural heritage and of historical landscapes.

The second important question raised by the manifesto, and connected to the former, was to define *who are the Italian Public Historians and where finding them?* Italian public historians “without using the name”, already operate in the cultural market and in public institutions; more recently, “real” public historians have entered the job market of cultural professions with a master's degree in public history or in the communication of history. Professional figures, connected to the field of Public History can be found in heritage, libraries, archives, museums, the media, etc. Those practitioners are working as “public historians” and the role of the AIPH is to promote their public history practices in connection with their own professional associations (libraries, museums, archives, the media) and the many historical associations. The heritage sector, the tourism industry, many different cultural institutions and even schoolteachers, together with professional volunteers, engage in cultural and social promotion of their communities' heritage and history. They are now involved in the discipline. These practitioners are *de facto* active public historians working with and for different audiences.

Furthermore, social, economic and even religious institutions have approached the AIPH in search of advice about the best professional practices to manage their historical heritage. For the first time, they think

Public History methods may provide answers to their needs and give them a complementary professional background to adjust their “traditional” activities. For all these reasons, Italian Public History is an outstanding social, cultural but also an economic and financial resource. The Manifesto mentions that Italian public historians and public archaeologists foster the culture industry and tourism, through “*the promotion of the Italian historical, material and immaterial cultural heritage, in all its forms.*”

What the Manifesto also wanted to acknowledge, is how academic historians are actively becoming public historians within and outside universities. In universities because some historians “*have chosen Public History as a research and teaching subject*”. In this way, they become “part-time” public historians. Outside, when they “*make history interacting with audiences outside the academic community*”, and when they play a very important social role in communicating history to wider audiences. Many academic historians participate in public history projects, as consultants to curators in museums and exhibitions, or, when they thwart instrumental and political uses of the past in the media; this happens when they think about their audiences like public historians always should do, and when they interact with different publics outside the classroom. They perform what is called in Italy, the “*third mission*”, after teaching and conducting research: “*with the introduction of the Self-Assessment, Periodic Evaluation and Accreditation (AVA) system, the Third Mission is recognized to all effects, as an institutional mission of universities, alongside teaching and research*”. This is about the dissemination of sound historical knowledge together with extra academic research practices within communities with and for different publics.

When actively practiced, *third mission* activities become an integrated part of the professional activities of academic historians who should apply their skills and knowledge of history in society. Here lies the entire challenge to the profession of historian today in Italy: being able to change narrative registers, integrate the web and all media, be able to communicate smoothly to different audiences and produce history for, and together with, communities. It is evident that the many historical layers defining our communities are made up of family histories, collective pasts, nearby pasts, even national pasts and local and national memories with which to interpret our present, in and with the public. In Italy, it is also about building popular approaches to the different temporal registers of the past, which Rafael Samuel called a *social form of knowledge*. This is even truer now that digital technologies are applied to history, having created an enormous gap between an old academic profession and young generations of social actors in the web.

The Manifesto also confronts the different concepts used to talk about the past in public. The terms “past” and “memory” are commonly used (and misused) today, even more than the word history, which seems to refer to

something that is controlled outside communities by people with no capacity to share their knowledge and differentiate their forms of narrating it. This is where the public historian's role comes into action and where the AIPH felt the need for a Manifesto for *"the promotion of historical knowledge and of the methodologies of historical research with different audiences, encouraging multidisciplinary dialogue; the valorisation of practices and experiences that focus on the active involvement of groups and communities, even in the digital world. ... Public historians develop forms of public activism in order to "contrast the "abuses of history", meant as the practices of mystification of the past in order to manipulate public opinion...."*

The *Manifesto* lists, amongst others, some characteristics of applied professional skills, which are present in different professional public and private contexts. Public historians can play an important informative role in governmental bodies and institutions: *"Public Historians, as professional historians,... give a considerable contribution in the administrative and legislative sphere, providing professional consulting activities in the public and private spheres– such as, for example, those related to the government of the territory or in legal disputes that concern the territorial communities."*

On the other hand, the *Manifesto* informs us of the most important purposes of the foundation of an Italian association and of a public historians' professional hermeneutic that should lead to the creation of a new academic sub-discipline, and to the *"promotion of historical knowledge, and of the methodologies of historical research encouraging multidisciplinary dialogue."*

Knowledge of history is of course important, like its teaching and its communication. What is even more important is making history in public with the provision of professional skills because *"history as critical knowledge, and the methodologies of historical research, are necessary for the resolution of today's issues"*. Public historians share their historical methods with the public. In doing so, they reinforce wider critical thinking. They disclose the complexity of history and teach source evaluation and evidence of the past in their respective contexts; this critical knowledge, applied within groups and communities, serves the purpose of a better understanding of the roots of collective memories through shared authority practices, a method close to how anthropologists work with communities. This is why, the Italian Manifesto recognizes that Public History promotes and valorizes *"innovative and high-quality researches, whose results are obtained through participative practices and methodologies that may consent the emergence of new documents"*. Communities produce their own sources with the mediation of public historians and through interdisciplinary research and oral history practices for recent history.

The *Manifesto* contributes to the building of a conscious Italian citizenship that avoids walls and divisions between communities, when these

communities fear the globalization processes and “otherness”. *“Public History practices offer occasions and tools for the critical comprehension of historical contexts and of present processes, helping to confront their complexity avoiding resentment-ridden solutions, or resolutions induced by alleged “identitarian clashes”.* ”The practice of active public history projects within communities *“allows overcoming the fears and prejudices that are multiplying in the contemporary world”.* In this case, *“Public History is a precious resource for social cohesion, promoting comprehension and the encounter between people of different provenience, of different generations and with sometimes conflicting memories.”*

The final paragraph of the manifesto deals with the specificity of an Italian tradition confronted with an International discipline. National paths to public history result from the building of national historiographies and of the way historical institutions and historians' practices have developed historically.

10. Conclusion

If we compare Italian Public history to the long-standing tradition of North American Public history, there is no substantial difference in how history professionally applies in public or how local communities aim at governing their pasts and memories through public history. Nonetheless, there exists a fundamental difference in the way in which Italian historians become public historians: the teaching of Public history in Italy is very recent, and universities -and the government- are not yet preparing historians to become public historians: a specific academic teaching curriculum for public history is still absent from universities. In Italy, public history is either “revealed” to cultural operators as something they have already practiced in the field for many years, or one needs to enrol in the few local masters’ programs and specialized courses to become in a way, a “graduate” in public history. What is needed in Italy, is to make sure that official educational programs will recognize public history as a discipline fully integrated within the many humanities curricula.

The AIPH –and the Italian Public History Manifesto- strive to ensure that, the results and the methodologies of historiographical research, are known to a wider public of citizens and that history is communicated well, and with greater emotional and direct involvement of different publics. Sound community research through interaction with the public, will lead to new popular and original developments in historical knowledge and, to a growing public passion for the past.

For Italian Public Historians, it becomes essential to consider publics, whether specialized or not, both as privileged interlocutors and as potential protagonists of the making of history. In this way, Public History will contribute to the restoration to history and to historians, of a central role in interpreting a complex Italian contemporary society in which collective

memories populate long-term historical explanations.