

From Global to Local?

**Digitale Methoden in den Geisteswissenschaften im
deutschsprachigen Raum: Ein Triptychon**

*Ulrike Wuttke, Christopher Nunn, Christian Schröter,
Melanie Seltmann & Christian Wachter*

**Digital Humanities and Public Humanities at the Venice Centre for
Digital and Public Humanities (VeDPH)**
**A global-local outlook at the intersection between Public Humanities,
Public History and Digital Humanities (Transkription)**

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Franz Fischer
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2026

Digital Humanities and Public Humanities at the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities (VeDPH) – A global-local outlook at the intersection between Public Humanities, Public History and Digital Humanities (Transkription)

Ulrike Wuttke, Franz Fischer, Stefania De Vincentis,
Federico Boschetti, Amanda Madden, Stefano Dall'Aglio,
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Sara-Lee Nußbaum (Transkription)

Intro und Einleitung zur Folge

Musik: „Bleeping Demo“ von Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com).¹

Ulrike Wuttke: Bonjour und herzlich willkommen!

Digital Humanities, Computational Humanities, eHumanities? Ihr hört ein Audio-Essay aus der Reihe „From Global to Local DH: In eigenen Worten“. In dieser Reihe betrachten wir spezifische Ausprägungen der Digital Humanities und geben einen Einblick in ihre Vielfalt. Hier fragen wir uns: Wie hat der Computereinsatz die Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaften verändert? Gibt es lokale, föderale, nationale oder sogar globale Eigenhei-

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ten der Digital Humanities? Wo stehen wir heute? Und wo geht die Reise hin? Dabei lassen wir in jeder Episode verschiedene Personen aus der Fachcommunity zu Worte kommen. Mit anderen Worten: Digital Humanists „In eigenen Worten“!

Wir, das sind Ulrike Wuttke und Anne Baillot sowie verschiedene Gäste. Schön, dass ihr mit dabei seid.

Geräusch parkender Gondeln

Ulrike Wuttke: Habt ihr es erlauscht? In der heutigen Episode nehme ich, Ulrike, Euch mit nach Venedig, und zwar ans Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities (VeDPH) oder Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici (DSU) der Ca' Foscari Universität Venedig.

This episode is probably one of the most global episodes of this series, and not only because the rest of this episode will be in English. At the VeDPH we will meet several international experts, learn about concepts, developments and projects in the field of Digital and Public Humanities, and questions like: What are Public and Digital Humanities and how do they relate to each other? How do digital methods change the humanities? And which role play local and global context?

Venice is a city unlike no other. For me, it has always shifted between local and global contexts. While the VeDPH director Franz Fischer forms a link and node between the German and the Italian Digital Humanities communities, Venice has been home during the 70s for several years to the activities of Father Busa's Index Thomisticus.

So, allora, andiamo, let's go to Venice.

Parkende Gondeln: Venedig

Teil 1: Digital Humanities und Public Humanities (Kontext)

mit: Franz Fischer (Associate Professor for Medieval and Humanist Latin Literature, director of VeDPH)

02:40 – 09:45: Interview mit Franz Fischer

Ulrike Wuttke: At the VeDPH I had the pleasure to talk with Franz Fischer. Since 2019 he is Associate Professor for Medieval and Humanist Latin Literature and Founding Director of the VeDPH. Knowing that Franz Fischer had studied at the University of Cologne, I couldn't resist to ask him if he had met Manfred Thaller.

Franz Fischer: Yeah, Manfred Thaller is definitely the founding figure in Cologne for Digital Humanities or „Historisch Kulturwissenschaftliche Informationsverarbeitung“, as you call it there. Later I was in direct contact with Manfred Thaller, but I was always friendly with his ‘disciples’ or with his students. And so that was a very exciting period, the early days of DH in Cologne, the first time as a study program, because there was that figure of Manfred Thaller who was able to bring all these people together, young scholars who wanted to benefit from the new opportunities that came about with technology.

Parkende Gondeln: Venedig

Ulrike Wuttke: Now it is time to learn from Franz Fischer about the relationship between Digital and Public Humanities – the two concepts that are at the heart of this episode.

Franz Fischer: It's an open question and it's changing. So of course, Digital Humanities is taking use of technologies, resources in digital formats to apply technology, software that is at the service of humanities research. I'm originally still a humanist, that's why I like also the emphasis on being a humanist. I know there's also an Italian tradition which is much more on the computing side, but that's not my core competence. I'm not a programmer, I don't know how to program. But I like the conceptual work,

and I see the big benefits of taking use and collaborating with people who have then the more technical expertise to bring research projects about. And of course, the connections are very close. Of course, tools can be used and technology as an enabler of the public to be engaged with cultural heritage, with research, to participate or the participatory aspect of humanities, which is a good, I definitely want to follow and achieve.

Public Humanities are a lot of things. It's easily understood as something, so you communicate more efficiently to the public, you use social media; you have publication that are easier to understand. But that's a little bit one directional, top down, the professional who then makes the public having part of what you think is important for the public. But there are lots of shades and other ways where you involve the public or non-professionals, amateurs, in the process of creating knowledge also to establish research questions. And you are more than an enabler of a process that leads to a better understanding of what is important to the people or to specific communities. It's more a collaboration of people who are interested in questions that drive the humanities on materials, cultural heritage, in literature, in art, to find a way to have everyone taking what we love, what we enjoy, what we want to understand.

Ulrike Wuttke: When we discussed this topic a bit further, Franz especially underlined the importance of public participation for humanities research and gave an example how the concept of Citizen Scienceship means more than crowdsourcing.

Franz Fischer: Citizen Scienceship is more, you engage and collaborate with the public on the same level. So, you are all citizens, it's not the crowd who does the stupid job and then the intellectual work is being done by the scholars.

Nun nehmen wir ein Vaporetto, einen typischen venezianischen Wasserbus, und besuchen das VeDPH im Palazzo Malcanton Marcora. Vaporetto (Wasserbus, fahrend): Venedig

Ulrike Wuttke: To kick off the discussion about the VeDPH, I asked Franz Fischer how he experienced its founding and mission in 2019.

Franz Fischer: To establish a centre was something new. And we had a lot of funding for this *Progetto di Eccellenza*. That was a very creative, productive time because we had a lot of opportunities. So that funding, we run out of funding, but now we live from what we were able to create: Sustainable structures, activities, a master program, a journal and summer school. So, many formats where we teach, where we collaborate in research with colleagues at Ca' Foscari, at the department, but beyond so in the region and internationally. Digital Humanities is very much *en vogue* since many years and everyone wants to surf on that wave in a way, but there was and still is some need because digital resources have been produced in Ca' Foscari also before my advent here. There was a strong need from colleagues who have been working already with digital methodologies or tools and digital publications to have competences so someone can take institutional responsibility. So, that was definitely one of the intentions. And then all the promises that come along with Digital Humanities, competences, as regards applications for major grants, of course, that's what administration likes. But I think it's just the understanding that advanced research cannot ignore the potential of what has been created by scholars in the past decades to enhance research with digital methodologies, tools, and I think this is quite obvious.

Ulrike Wuttke: Before we hear more about the VeDPH and its activities, you maybe take a note to check out the Hidden Venice App which originated at the centre. This immersive app guides users to discover Venice by following an interactive version of Ludovico Ughi's historical map and is a telling example of the centre's activities. You will find the link in the show notes.

Parkende Gondeln: Venedig

Ulrike Wuttke: The next sections contain impressions from interviews with researchers at the VeDPH about Digital Humanities, Public Humanities and Neurohumanities. I'm grateful to all colleagues for their time and especially to all Italian colleagues to talk about their research in English.

Teil 2: Digital Humanities

mit: Stefania De Vincentis (Associate Professor for Contemporary Art History, VeDPH), Federico Boschetti (subject expert, VeDPH, CNR), Amanda Madden (Assistant Professor of History, George Mason University and Roy Rosenzweig Center for History).

Straßenmusik: Venedig

10:08 – 17:06: Interview mit Stefania De Vincentis

Ulrike Wuttke: We start the section about Digital Humanities with Stefania De Vincentis and ways for a new Digital Museography. Stefania is Associate Professor for Contemporary Art History and part of the VeDPH core team.

Stefania De Vincentis: My background is of course Art History, but mainly art production. I graduated from the Academy of Fine Art in Italy, Bologna. I was a painter, a master of painting, but today my main interest is in Digital Museum. I'm working on a project that looks at the museum environment and how technologies and Digital Humanities are modelling both the space and the display of art collection.

Ulrike Wuttke: For our listeners, could you please give a short definition: What is Digital Museography?

Stefania De Vincentis: Actually, Digital Museography is mostly a neologism that refers to all the actions, practices and techniques that involve the design, organization, curation of the exhibition environment; including the display of collection, the accessibility aspect, interaction, communication practices using various diverse technologies from VR – virtual reality – and all the series of virtual reality technologies such as augmented reality, cross reality to the artificial intelligence as well as computational languages. Then also Digital Humanities is involved. The studies in the field are increasing day by day, but to mention just the pioneer, perhaps Werner Schweibenz is one of the scholars I'm mostly referring to in my studies. He is the one of the first to state the definition of Virtual Museum. But also, other scholars are Ross Parry, Vince Dziekan, Fiona Cameron, Sarah

Kenderdine, just to mention some of them. But in the field of Visual Art, the main one is Jeffrey Shaw.

Ulrike Wuttke: Stefania is currently not only involved in teaching Digital Art and Digital Iconography, she also works on a specific virtual reality case study as part of a cooperation with the Villa Borghese Museum at Rome.

Stefania De Vincentis: The project that I'm carrying on with the collaboration of the Villa Borghese Museum aims to combine the technology and language of exhibition design, such as VR360, to provide direct access to museum collections, information and descriptions, by adopting the IIIF metadata standard. IIIF stands for International Image Interoperability Framework. This approach is rooted in the history of the panorama. The panorama is a 19th century visual medium invented by Robert Barker to immerse the viewer in a 360° painted environment, offering a spectacular and educational view of places and landscapes otherwise inaccessible to many. A similar intention drives the project at the Borghese. Thanks to a study of a specific use of the VR360 language corresponding to the exhibition and access choices of museum's director and creators, we were able to obtain a series of panoramic images of the museum's rooms. In this project, the IIIF standards have been adopted as a framework to access the metadata of each of the artworks, providing a description of the rooms of the museum and the object displayed in the room. But we don't only have access to the description. This model could also open each of the described objects into the Mirador Viewer, allowing users to create their own workspace for comments and annotations.

So, we have a double possibility for the users: Visiting the museum through the virtual room and then dive into a much more detailed description of each singular object, each singular artwork, gaining new information, improved and very updated information and metadata of each artwork that was presented. And also, they can add it in their own workspace and use it for their own research purpose or also for curatorial practices - if we are considering also the officers that are working in a museum. So, this is a solution that works in several directions. The possibilities are many, as are the implications in terms of accessibility and, again, curation tools. But for this project now there is still a lot to be done, we are at the very beginning at this stage of the project. We plan soon,

I hope within a year, to publish at least the prototype of the three completed rooms: the museum collects paintings, sculptures, antiquities, furniture and then you also have all the frescoes on the ceiling, the mosaics on the floor. I don't want to call it simply a virtual tour because, close to the narrative and the immediate aspect of the storytelling approach that a virtual tour could offer, we have another level, another layer of much more depth that opens a new access to knowledge in several forms.

Ulrike Wuttke: If you want to learn more about Stefania's theoretical reflections on the Digital Museum, I recommend to you her article about the so-called mega dungeon in the centre's very own open access journal *magazén*.

Parkende Gondeln: Venedig

17:17 – 26:02: Interview mit Federico Boschetti

Ulrike Wuttke: After this short trip to Rome and the virtual Villa Borghese with Stefania De Vincentis, it's time to travel back to Venice and to talk to Federico Boschetti. Federico holds a PhD in Classical Philology and a PhD in Brain and Cognitive Sciences: Language, Interaction and Computation. In 2019 he has joined the VeDPH.

Federico Boschetti: My role at the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities encompasses didactic, scientific and technological aspects of Digital Humanities. I supervise internships, master's theses and next year I will teach a Computational Philology for Digital and Public Humanities course. I organize a series of webinars on Digital Philology that complements the centre's seminar series, and I participate in and co-organize conferences in Digital Humanities and Computational Linguistics. Additionally, I contribute to the development of software relevant to Digital Philology and manage our servers.

Ulrike Wuttke: Federico Boschetti is also closely involved into national and international infrastructure initiatives and projects such as CLARIN. Together with Franz Fischer, Federico coordinates the CLARIN Knowledge Centre for Digital and Public Textual Scholarship.

Federico Boschetti: CLARIN is the European research infrastructure for linguistic and textual resources that facilitates a seamless knowledge transfer among all the stakeholders involved in the construction, maintenance and utilization of these resources via its knowledge centres. In recent years our efforts have centred on developing the website with catalogues of pertinent scientific references and Pills of Knowledge on specific topics like HTR², for example, and organizing training activities for MA and PhD students. We also promote inter centre exchanges through CLARIN Mobility Grants. The Pills of Knowledge are very short webpages in which we try to give to the newbies a compass and materials for beginners.

Ulrike Wuttke: Given that Federico is also a specialist for Domain Specific Languages or DSL, I asked him to explain this concept in a nutshell.

Federico Boschetti: We can say that Digital Humanists commonly use XML TEI, maybe unfamiliar to traditional humanists who are focused on their specific research yet are interested in creating machine actionable and interoperable resources. So, the domain specific languages for DH are formal languages typically defined by a context programmer that are optimized for highly specialized tasks in our domain such as encoding complex critical apparatus, stand-off annotation of linguistic phenomena, and more. Domain specific languages for DH – compared to general purpose solutions – enhance compactness, transparency, consistency, completeness, actionability and also familiarity, as we said before. So, we guess that it is important to create these bridges between the traditional disciplines and the digital counterparts of the traditional disciplines.

Ulrike Wuttke: Another fascinating topic you are passionate about in your research is Handwritten Text Recognition. Could you give us a brief outline first of all about HTR and also about the objectives of the H2IOSC project?

Federico Boschetti: Yeah, of course. So, HTR stands for Handwritten Text Recognition. The use of neural networks for text recognition from digital

² HTR steht für Handwritten Text Recognition (siehe unten, HTR wurde auch in der Folge über das DHIP mit Pauline Spyrala behandelt).

images of text bearing objects such as the pages of manuscript, for example, has significantly improved the digitization accuracy. Previously the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) was limited to extracting text from printed editions. However, it's now possible to recognize text from handwritten documents including manuscripts, postcards and personal memoirs. VeDPH collaborates with the École des Chartes and INRIA, the French National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology, on HTR projects led by Thibault Clérice. Indeed, enhancing HTR performance heavily relies on large quantities of ground truth data, which consists of text samples manually transcribed and accurately mapped onto the original images.

H2IOSC is a project that creates a collaborative cluster of European distributed research infrastructures involved in the humanities and cultural heritage sectors with operating nodes across Italy. It federates four consortia: CLARIN-IT, DARIAH-IT, E-RIHS.it, and OPERAS-IT. Each one focuses on distinct aspects of Digital Humanities. CLARIN-IT concentrates on language resources and technology, providing tools and services to support the processing and analysis of textual and spoken data. DARIAH-IT promotes digital methods in arts and humanities research. E-RIHS integrates scientific techniques in heritage conservation and OPERAS advances open scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities. HTR and also OCR are highly relevant for H2IOSC because digitization is both the starting point and often the bottleneck in the digital workflow planned by H2IOSC.

Ulrike Wuttke: Which role do national and international aspects play, in your opinion, for Digital Humanities research, especially regarding the small or the so called under resourced languages?

Federico Boschetti: The synergy and coordination between national and international dimension of resources are crucial as they ensure that local aspects such as so called minor literary authors or linguistic minorities are neither overwhelmed nor deemed irrelevant on the global stage. Simultaneously, these efforts prevent global concerns like standardization and broad interoperability among resources created in different countries from being underestimated in more localized or national contexts. For example, the University of Cologne hosts the CLARIN Knowledge Centre for Linguistic Diversity and Language Documentation. Additionally,

the Endangered Language Archive, currently based in Berlin, was a founding member of the CLARIN-UK consortium in 2015.

Ulrike Wuttke: Do you have any examples?

Federico Boschetti: Yeah. For example, Griko that is spoken in Southern Italy, and there are very, very few speakers.

Ulrike Wuttke: Last but not least, I asked Federico about his vision for the Digital Humanities.

Federico Boschetti: I guess that they should evolve in the direction of Co-operative Humanities. That means a cooperation among humans and machines. You create something that third parties can reuse in a way that you haven't in mind now. And this is an aspect that is very present in the industry, for example, but it is totally not present in the traditional humanities. Now we have Artificial Intelligence (AI), we have these new actors on the scene. So, I guess that we must consider them as our collaborators in a certain sense, naturally, with a critical attitude, but they will be more and more present in our life as researchers.

Parkende Gondeln: Venedig

26:12 – 32:57: Interview mit Amanda Madden

Ulrike Wuttke: You have probably already sensed the international atmosphere at the VeDPH. It provided the opportunity to me to interview Amanda Madden, who stayed at the centre as a visiting scholar. Amanda Madden is Assistant Professor at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media and also Assistant Professor in the Faculty of History and Art History at George Mason University (GMU) in the Washington, D.C. area. A short note on the sound quality: Amanda was a bit sick when we conducted the interview, so her voice was afflicted, and we also needed to keep a distance. But now let's hear from Amanda herself about her research interests.

Amanda Madden: I have several areas of focus, one of which is, of course, Digital History and Digital Humanities. I'm also an Early Modern Italian Historian who uses a lot of digital tools to do Social and Micro History

of Early Modern Italy. One of my primary areas of focus currently is violence in Early Modern Italy, specifically violence in Venice and the Republic of Venice in the Terraferma. I have been Visiting Faculty here at the Centre for the past semester, doing research in the Archivi di Stato, looking at criminal records and the records of the Council of Ten, or a current project that I'm working on, which is Mapping Urban Violence in Venice and the Terraferma in the Early Modern period, specifically 1500 – 1700. I do a lot of spatial work, although I use other Digital Humanities tools in my research as part of my methodological toolbox, including network analysis. I'm very, very interested in most Digital Humanities tools.

Ulrike Wuttke: I asked Amanda how she discovered GIS³ for her research.

Amanda Madden: It was not anticipated or planned. I started working with GIS actually as a postdoc at the Georgia Institute of Technology. My department sent me to the Digital Humanities Summer Institute in Victoria, British Columbia – one of the primary or has been for a long time one of the primary training centres for Digital Humanities tools. It's actually a computer program, [GIS] was developed by, I believe, the US government in the 1960s to do geographic mapping. It's not necessarily a natural fit for the humanities, but it's a very interesting program to work with if you want to analyse humanities data. It was a week-long class in GIS which was taught by Ian Gregory, one of the leading practitioners of historical GIS in the world for that matter.

Ulrike Wuttke: What does it add to researching violence in Venice?

Amanda Madden: That's a really, really good question. Working on violence in early modern period can be very challenging. Working on historical violence, you don't necessarily have a continuous run of archival records. Doing this kind of work in premodern materials is not a good candidate for this sort of statistical analysis that modern day criminologists like to use. Because you don't have a continuous run of data, it's impossible to create comprehensive data sets. It can be useful to use other types of tools to examine and analyse the social impacts of violence or how violence is treated. This is particularly in the Early modern period in Venice,

³ GIS steht für Geographical Information Systems.

it is a period in which the criminal courts were still being standardized, so to speak. I think that one of the interesting applications of the methodology of GIS is you can do a sort of spatial analysis of crime. So, even if you don't have the records, you can use GIS as a program. If you have a data set or a more complete data set, you can use the program to get a sense of hot spots or places where crimes took place.

Ulrike Wuttke: So, for example, now I'm making this up, if you see on your visualization then that all drive-by gondola shootings happen in front of churches, you start asking yourself why this is?

Amanda Madden: Right. That's a really good example. The drive-by gondola shootings in particular are very interesting because they say a lot about Venetian society in particular, including that water is central to how Venetians, Early Modern Venetians, still live today, but also lived in the Early Modern period. As well as thinking about using gondolas as getaway vehicles or using gondolas to hide themselves or escape quickly after having committed a crime, that would be a very interesting question you could ask.

You know, teaching students how to use a program like this when, when you look at it, it can be very intimidating and there's a lot of buttons to push and there are a lot of technical terms, and it can feel like you're really climbing a mountain. So, I'm very interested in showing students or colleagues, once you figure it out, it's actually easier than one would think. And it's also a really powerful tool to do certain types of research.

Ulrike Wuttke: Which role does collaboration location play for the Digital Humanities communities? What did you learn from the ADHO⁴ perspective?

Amanda Madden: ADHO in DH is such a massive undertaking. The conferences are probably the biggest Digital Humanities conferences in the world. It's a conference run exclusively by volunteers, including the leadership, a conference coordinating committee and the local organizers. You know, we were really fortunate in the sense that our collaborators

⁴ ADHO steht für Alliance of Digital Humanities Associations.

were absolutely fantastic: from the ADHO leadership to the conference coordinating committee, we worked with them very closely in putting together a conference and had weekly meetings. I think that's right, there were a lot of meetings. One of the interesting aspects of the conference is it also is a group of people who are coming from very different traditions, whether it's in the Digital Humanities or academic traditions. It's great that at the conferences, that DH is in so many different places.

Ulrike Wuttke: From Amanda, the application of GIS technology, and the ADHO DH 2024 conference, it's now time to travel back to Venice and learn more about Public Humanities, the second focus area of the VeDPH.

Teil 3: Public Humanities

mit: Stefano Dall'Aglio (Associate Professor of Early Modern History, VeDPH), Gilda Zazzara (Associate Professor of Contemporary History, Ca' Foscary University), Dr Elisa Corrò (Research Facilitator, VeDPH).

33:05 – 38:09: Interview mit Stefano Dall'Aglio

Straßenmusik: Venedig

Ulrike Wuttke: The first guest of this section is Stefano Dall'Aglio, Associate Professor of Early Modern History.

Stefano Dall'Aglio: I am the coordinator of the Master's degree program in Digital and Public Humanities. This is a program that has been created together with the Venice Centre, deals more or less with the same subjects. It's an innovative opportunity for students coming from many different places. The number of teaching modules on Public Humanities is still very, very limited on the planet. So, the different teaching modules that are already existing take the field in a different direction. Our specificity in Venice is that we connect the Digital with the Public Humanities. The relation is very strict, but of course also the two aspects can be independent of one another. So, you can have the Digital without the Public, you can have the Public without the Digital, but we are very much interested in the broad area of intersection in which digital technologies are

used in order to disseminate the research and the humanities or involve the public in humanities research. Obviously, it's not easy to give the students the opportunity to travel and move to events in some other countries because of the funding, which is not always easy to get. But we can connect online. Of course, nowadays there are so many opportunities in terms of online exchange and online collaboration, but this is not always easy because we have different needs and different availabilities. But also, we have other opportunities of exchange. We have visiting scholars, we have the opportunity of guest lectures, seminars, conferences, lots of activities entirely delivered in English, to which our students are always invited. And this, I think, is an invaluable opportunity for our students to meet scholars, to listen to interesting papers, and to learn something more than what we can offer.

Ulrike Wuttke: You are also on the advisory board of the new open access journal *Public Humanities*. Which role does Open Access publication play in the context of this field?

Stefano Dall'Aglio: Open Access is as important for Digital and Public Humanities as all the other things, because we care about Open Source, we care about Open Data. All of these things make us think about the digital but also make us realise that we need to be as public as possible in order to remove the paywall as much as we can to make all that we do – from articles to digital installations to projects – accessible to everybody so that it can be an advantage for all the scholars and the students out there.

Ulrike Wuttke: Last but not least, I asked Stefano about global-local aspects of Public History.

Stefano Dall'Aglio: Public History has always been conceived in many very different ways in the US and in Europe, because in these two geographical contexts, the history of Public History is completely different. Public History in the US was born in the mid-70s and was conceived mainly as Applied History, which meant learning the toolkit of the historian and to take it outside of the historical context in order to apply the historical methodology to completely different types of job, including jobs in the public sector or in private companies. Whereas in Europe, with partly the exception of the United Kingdom, the history of Public History is completely different, so much so that the International Federation of Public History,

which includes more or less all the countries in the world but the United States, was born in 2011, which means also almost 35 years after the birth of the American association. It's called the National Council on Public History. It's a very solid organization associated to a number of conferences, events, and also an international journal, which is one of the leading journals in the field.

Ulrike Wuttke: Thank you so much, Stefano for this interview and I wish you good luck with all your further efforts.

Stefano Dall'Aglio: Thank you very much for having me.

38:10 – 45:01:09: Interview mit Gilda Zazzara

Ulrike Wuttke: The second guest at this section is Gilda Zazzara, Associate Professor of Contemporary History at the Department of Humanities at Ca' Foscari University.

Gilda Zazzara: I teach contemporary history here at Ca' Foscari and I'm interested in work and labour from many different methodological perspectives. I've worked on trade unions archives as well as with oral sources, and I've also frequently worked on working class writings, I would say, such as diaries, memories, autobiographies. What I'm mainly interested in are labour cultures, labour meanings, and how people have coped with changing working conditions.

Podcast-Fragment (Musik, italienische Stimmen): Giralomo Li Causi

Ulrike Wuttke: You just listened to a short fragment from one of Gilda's podcasts. During our interview I asked her how it all started.

Gilda Zazzara: Basically, I like listening to podcasts of various genres. I see great potential of podcasting as a medium to think history in the present and to make history a living, not a dead knowledge. So, at some point I just wanted to try it myself. But more seriously, while I started researching and studying deindustrialization, I came across the work of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling based at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, and they have an impressive digital archive and many projects, many interesting projects, including one of audio

walks. And in my podcast series *Strade di Porto Marghera* (Streets of Porto Marghera), I try to describe the making of the post-industrial landscape, walking through it accompanied by former workers.

The podcast titled *Giralomo Li Causi: il fantasma di una voce* (The Ghost of a Voice) has been realized with my colleague Alessandro Casellato, who is Professor of Oral History. And in this case audio documents are at the very centre of the research or research questions. Giralomo Li Causi was a prominent communist leader from Sicily. All written sources speak of an extraordinary orator, a great communicator, able of inflaming the masses. So, we were looking for audio documents to also understand this relationship of the leader with the masses, but the recordings we found, spread and buried also in many archives, were obviously all from many years later, when he was a mature man and a communist leader with national roles. His way of speaking was completely different from what we had imagined. He was calm, kind of bureaucratic, extremely self-controlled. So, in this sense, the voice we were looking for was a voice that could not be revived. It remained only in memory, or in written sources, or in myth.

Podcast-Fragment (Musik, italienische Stimmen): Giralomo Li Causi

Gilda Zazzara: We must be very careful when we listen to past voices comprehending, understanding that it's not possible to get an authenticity through oral sources. Oral sources have to be managed exactly as written sources, through the methods of critical inquiry and historical methods.

Therefore, I think that producing audio essays through podcasts combines digital skills with humanistic skills. Podcast is a kind of pocket history that you can listen to while going to work or while doing whatever you like. But this does not mean that it's like a poorer way of investigating and thinking of the past. And I think that podcasting is giving new perspectives and also challenges an old debate among oral historians. So, Oral History basically produces Written History. And there is a brilliant comment by Raphael Samuel, a great British historian in the 70s, in the renowned journal *Oral History*, in which he talks about the perils of transcript. When we transcribe, we create a new record from which many important elements for interpretation of course disappear, but at the same time, learning the technique of digital editing makes us aware of how

much manipulation, albeit digital manipulation, can be done on audio documents. So here too, we meet again the theme of the issue of the ghost of the voice. Once it's recorded and edited, it's no longer authentic, no more than a written document that has to be contextualized.

It's important for us historians to have a conversation with other professionals like audio content authors, digital editors, and other people who are really good at communicating history and making a public history through this technology.

Podcasting is a powerful, I would say dissemination tool, but it has a limit in my opinion, and that is that it tends to be a solitary, individual fruition, but for me, Public History begins or is made when it's discussed and experienced collectively. Public History entails having a public and not a one-to-one relationship.

45:02 – 50:47: Interview mit Elisa Corrò

Ulrike Wuttke: At the end of this section on Public Humanities, I talk with Elisa Corrò about the dissemination of cultural heritage and Neurohumanities. Elisa holds a PhD in Ancient History and Archaeology and is the Centre's research facilitator. I asked her to explain to us Neurohumanities and talk about her research activities. Let's hear from Elisa!

Elisa Corrò: Neurohumanities is an emerging field that integrates neuroscience with the humanities to explore how humans perceive, experience, and engage with cultural heritage. It examines, for instance, the cognitive and emotional processes triggered by art, architecture, and historical artifacts, helping us understand why certain experiences resonate deeply with individuals and the communities. At its core, Neurohumanities aims to bridge the gap between scientific insights about the brain and interpretative frameworks of the Humanities, offering innovative ways to study memory, perception and so on. So, we developed, we employed a neurohumanistic approach because the development of Neuroscience here and today allows us to conduct quantitative studies also on complex cognitive processes.

For instance, we observed a distinction in how experts and non-experts engage with monuments, with art and the diverse perspective they have

through which also archaeological sites are perceived, enriching our understanding and facilitating more inclusive interpretation for all audiences. In short, specialized minds seem to work more on the foreground, for instance a site, the classified artifact, etc., while most visitors have a more focused mind on the background in the scenario, the description of forms, the monument as a stage. So, all this data, we are going to collect them, correlate them with quantitative analysis, such as for instance, eye tracking and certainly, to our eyes it seems like an interesting finding. It's a fascinating area and I'm happy and excited at the same time to see where it leads.

The opportunities are immense, and Neurohumanities can deepen our understanding on how people interact with archaeological spaces and for instance also studying how visitors engage with reconstructed sites. And additionally, it opens up to new avenues for collaboration, access and across also disciplines. So, there are a lot of challenges here, but I hope that in the future we can go in this direction. I love to create this kind of connections between us, shaping the future also of Neurohumanities and Humanity and Digital Humanities, let me say this. So yeah, there are a lot of instruments in this lab [the VeDPH lab], specialized also in the Neuro-humanities division.

Ulrike Wuttke: Is there a project, a specific project that is currently close to your heart or that you are working on at the moment that you could elaborate on a bit more for us?

Elisa Corrò: Yes. One project I'm particularly excited about is shared visions between two different cultures. And this initiative is deeply rooted in the themes of exploration and discovery, inspired by Marco Polo's journey and the connection he forged between the East and the West. So, last summer at the VeDPH lab, we developed a simulation, a test, designed to immerse participants in *Il Milione*, encouraging them to experience Marco Polo's journey not just through historical facts, but through the emotions and perceptions and the cultural exchange that define it. So, the simulation combined visual and tactile elements, such as digital representation of key cities and interactive materials, allowing participants to reflect on the act of discovery itself. And I'm thrilled to share that this simulation caught the attention of the Fondazione Archivio Vittorio Cini Foundation and Museyoum, a digital company here in Venice, who has agreed to col-

laborate with us on adapting the project for a public exhibition in Venice⁵. So, while the contents will be tailored to suit the needs and interests of a visiting audience, the core idea remains the same: bridging cultures and creating a space for exploration and shared understanding. And I'm excited about the possibilities this partnership will bring.

Ulrike Wuttke: Thank you so much for taking the time. Good luck with your efforts and let's go and try out one of your sensory machines.

Elisa Corrò: Okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

Glockenläuten und Wassergeräusche vom Kanal: Venedig

Fazit

mit: Amanda Madden (Assistant Professor of History, George Mason University and Roy Rosenzweig Center for History), Franz Fischer (Associate Professor for Medieval and Humanist Latin Literature, director of VeDPH), Dr Federico Boschetti (subject expert, VeDPH, CNR).

Ulrike Wuttke: As we approach the conclusion of this episode, we hear some final thoughts from some of our guests on the intricate relationship between the local and the global. I asked my guest to share one key takeaway, one story, or even one wish for how we can better navigate this local-global nexus.

51:18 – 51:55: O-Ton Amanda Madden

Amanda Madden: I think any Digital Humanities person would say that collaboration is a critical component of the Digital Humanities. If you aren't interested in collaboration, it's probably not the right field for you. It's probably not the right method necessarily. To do really any kind of deep, big data type of work, you need to collaborate; you need to find people who are interested in doing the same sort of work. And you need to think

⁵ <https://www.vittoriocini.it/2025.html#marcopolo25>.

about how you're going to share your knowledge and how you are going to put those projects together.

Ulrike Wuttke: While Amanda Madden underlines the importance of collaboration for Digital Humanists in the global-local context, Franz Fischer emphasizes the role of languages and the notion of DH as a meta discipline.

52:08 – 54:02: O-Ton Franz Fischer

Franz Fischer: I think the language thing is important and there are especially scholars from Italy and the Global South who very much criticize, are very sensitive for the imperialistic biases in scholarship that is dominated by the English language. And that is very obvious if you are aware of it. And so we always have to be aware of it because we are often not. So that's one point. Otherwise, flavour, when it comes more to how you apply or conceptualize the field, there are different flavours. So, the Italian flavour is very much that of DH in the disciplines, because DH is not a discipline in its own right, it only exists in the discipline. I'm here as a Medieval Latinist, not because I'm a DH scholar, but the reality is I have been recruited because I'm a DH scholar. DH is reflecting and advancing methodologies which apply to many disciplines. I don't care if I work on texts that are in German or in Latin or in Greek or in Italian, because the methodology is the same on an abstract level. It is really something that is at the heart of Digital Humanities as a discipline, which is to some extent then not a usual kind of discipline, because it's somehow transcending the other disciplines because it's very much focused on methodology.

Ulrike Wuttke: Last but not least, we hear from Federico Boschetti.

During your career and your trajectory through research, you have been around quite a lot. You have been to the United States, experienced or networked as a researcher, maybe with a specific focus on Digital Humanities.⁶

⁶ Dieser Satz ist offensichtlich ungrammatisch.

54:30 – 55:39: O-Ton Federico Boschetti

Federico Boschetti: Yeah, I guess that the international dimension is extremely important in Digital Humanities because you need to learn how other groups are working, are affording the challenges, and also which is their relations with their traditional contexts. Because we must have in mind that Digital Humanities are not just a global methodology that you can apply without an impact on the context. So, for me, it was very important to see how the French people, how the American people, how the German people work on the traditional humanities and with their digital counterpart in Digital Humanities.

Ulrike Wuttke: I was truly impressed by the number of Digital and Public Humanities activities and projects we heard about in this episode. I think it really speaks for the enthusiasm of my guests and also for the special atmosphere at the Centre.

55:56 – 57:28: O-Ton Franz Fischer

Franz Fischer: One of the beautiful things to work here in Venice is to have nice and interesting and interested guests. Scholars like you who come to me or to colleagues and just explore the opportunity, maybe we can do something together. So people like to work with our Centre, and it's also due to the fact, again, to the magic of the city, but it's also a very, very friendly place. I think what we established in the past few years is a space where people are happy to work together and follow up their research and enjoy with all this then also the environment, which is really a special place.

Ulrike Wuttke: I couldn't agree more. And I think what we can learn from this example about creating an interdisciplinary and international atmosphere is that creating opportunities is not only about funding and money and location, but it is about creating an open and welcoming spirit.

Franz Fischer: „Unglückselige Frösche, die ihr Venedig bewohnet, springt ihr zum Wasser heraus, springt ihr auf hartes Gestein.“ „Unfortunate frogs who inhabit Venice. If you jump out of the water, you jump onto hard rock.“

Outro

Ulrike Wuttke: At the very end of the episode, you heard Franz Fischer reading one of Goethe's *Venezianische Epigramme* that are the focus of a Digital Edition project he is currently working on. Stay tuned.

Vielen Dank fürs Zuhören. Ein großer Dank gilt den Gästen dieser Episode am VeDPH, thank you, mille grazie, sowie dem Global-Local-DH-Team für diese Episode, insbesondere Sara-Lee Nußbaum. Die Titelmusik ist „Bleeping Demo“ von Kevin MacLeod und sie ist unter einer Creative Commons: By Attribution 4.0 License lizenziert. Weitere Sounds wurden von mir aufgenommen.

Musik: „Bleeping Demo“ von Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com).⁷

Ulrike Wuttke: Wenn euch diese Episode gefallen hat und ihr nun neugierig geworden seid, dieses Audio-Essay ist Teil der multimedialen Sammelpublikation *From Global to Local. Digitale Methoden in den Geisteswissenschaften im deutschsprachigen Raum*. In ihr findet ihr noch mehr Audio-Essays wie dieses sowie spannende Forschungsartikel und Artefaktbiografien. Schaut doch einfach mal auf die Global-Local-Webpräsenz bei Melusina Press in Luxemburg⁸. Diese ist auch in den Shownotes verlinkt. Dort findet ihr auch weitere Informationen zur Folge und Transkriptionen.

Danke noch einmal für's Zuhören und bis zur nächsten Episode von „From Global to Local DH: In eigenen Worten“.

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⁸ <https://www.melusinapress.lu>.