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Looking Back, Going Forward: Education and the Making of Public[ly] Engaged Histories

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ABSTRACT: This article documents the emergence of the "participatory turn" in Public History in the UK, as academics in the humanities and social sciences have been encouraged to work more closely with communities, and to engage in research collaboration and co-production to produce "public[ly] engaged history". In the first part of the article UK case studies related to education, formal and informal, are presented to illustrate this shift in research focus. In the second part of the article, the authors argue that this "participatory turn" in Public History is not a new phenomenon, but dates to the History Workshop movement of the 1980s and earlier. In the final section of the paper, the article addresses the question of why such collaborative work in the past has been forgotten and what this means for the future of publicly engaged history.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Public History; School; Education; Public Engagement; United Kingdom.

Introduction[1]

What is "Public History"? This question has been posed many times. As long ago as 1978 Robert Kelley declared:

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Public History refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia… Public historians are at work whenever, in their professional capacity, they are part of the public process. An issue needs to be resolved, a policy must be formed, the use of a resource or the direction of an activity must be more effectively planned – and an historian is called upon to bring in the dimension of time: this is Public History.

Kelley wrote these words in the first issue of the American journal «The Public Historian». He continued,

In academic history, we minister humanity's generalized need to comprehend its past and to diffuse that comprehension, by means of formal schooling, within each generation… In Public History, the historian answers questions posed by others[2].

Here Public History is associated with the possession of disciplinary knowledge and its application in addressing real world issues rather than pursuing individual lines of inquiry. Over the last forty years the definition of Public History has expanded beyond disciplinary knowledge and application to the extent that it has become an umbrella offering shelter as a broad tolerant church to people's history, "applied history", "oral history", "heritage studies", "history at large" and "history from below"[3]. More recently, the discourse around Public History has moved in a different direction, at least in the UK, as the boundaries between universities and publics have become «more fluid … and there is an increasing emphasis … on the development of partnerships in the design and conduct of research»[4]. In the humanities and social sciences academics have been encouraged to work more closely with communities, and to engage in research collaboration and co-production. In short, Public History has embraced the "participatory turn" to produce public[ly] engaged history.

Looking back, going forward: education and the making of public[ly] engaged histories will first document the emergence in the recent present of the "participatory turn" in Public History through the example of a nationally organised participatory research project in the UK. Secondly, selected examples related to education, formal and informal, will be used to illustrate that participatory research involving communities is not a new phenomenon. Having demonstrated that there is a genealogy of public engagement with research the focus of the article will shift to the making of history and the

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[2] R. Kelley, *Public History: its origins, nature and prospects,* «The Public Historian», vol. 1, n. 1, 1978, pp. 16-28.

[3] J. Liddington, *What is Public History? Publics and their Pasts, Meanings and Practices*, «Oral History», vol. 30, n. 1, 2002, pp. 83-93; K. Myers, I. Grosvenor, *Collaborative Research: History from Below*, Bristol, University of Bristol and the AHRC Connected Communities Programme, 2018.

[4] K. Facer, K. Pahl, *Introduction*, in Idd. (edd.), *Valuing Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research*, Bristol, Policy Press, 2017, pp. 1-21.

delivery of radical plurality in research[5]. The final section will address why early participatory research projects have largely been forgotten. It will also consider the emergence of a reactionary response to the making of histories and the pluralising of knowledge.

1. *The "participatory turn" in Public History*

In 2010 Research Councils UK and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) launched an innovative new programme: *Connected Communities*. It was designed to help the Research Councils «understand the changing nature of communities in their historical and cultural contexts, and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life»[6]. The programme ran until 2019 and central to its activities was a concern to explore through research projects, partnerships, and networks how community and university expertise could best be combined to respond to the problems and possibilities of the contemporary world. It was unique in encouraging research that was co-produced and co-designed with communities and consequently challenging existing ways of knowledge creation.

When in 2014 the Coalition government in Britain launched its £50 million plan to mark the centenary of the Great War the Communities Secretary observed: «As the First World War moves out of common memory into history, we're determined to make sure these memories are retained»[7]. One mechanism identified to achieve this end was the establishment of five University led First World War Engagement Centres which would function under the umbrella of the *Connected Communities* programme. The core of the objectives set by the AHRC for these Centres was a desire to benefit communities across the UK by enhancing public understanding of the First World War and its role in shaping the world today, and to challenge traditional narratives of the conflict. This was to be achieved through: supporting community research and promoting research skills among a wide range of people, making them more confident in accessing and interpreting different types of sources and information; working collaboratively to reach new communities and make the commemoration

[5] T. Lindenberger, M. Wildt, *Radical Plurality: History Workshops as a Practical Critique of Knowledge*, «History Workshop», vol. 33, 1992, pp. 73-99; L. Parks, *The History of History Workshop*, Last updated: November 22, 2012 https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/the-history-of-history-workshop/ (last access: 12.10.2023).

[6] UK Research and Innovation, *Connected Communities*, Last updated: October 17, 2022 <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/connected-communities/> (last access: 20.03.2023).

[7] N. Clark, *Communities Secretary Eric Pickles says 2014's £50m World War 1 commemorations must not turn into "anti-German Festival"*, «The Independent», June 10, 2014.

relevant to, and inclusive of a culturally diverse population; and finally, through a shift in higher education's commitment to public engagement with research[8]. The Centres also collaborated with the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to support community projects funded through the *WW1 Then and Now* small grants programme. What follows is an account of one of the Centres and the "participatory turn".

2. *Participation in the recent present: The Voices of War and Peace First World War Engagement Centre 2014-2019*

Each of the Centres consisted of a consortium of universities based on a clustering of academics around areas of specialist research knowledge and extended research networks. *Voices*' academics clustered around six thematic research areas: Gender and the Home Front, Belief and the Great War, Commemoration, Cities at War, Childhood and Peace and Conflict. Organisationally the *Voices* Centre operated a hub and node model. The hub being in Birmingham with university nodes in the West Midlands (Wolverhampton, Worcester), Northern England (Manchester, Durham, Newcastle) and in Scotland (Glasgow). This had the benefit of associating community partnerships with local institutions and reinforced a strong sense of place. The hub was located in the Library of Birmingham – the largest public reference library in Europe rather than at the University. This was a deliberate decision – choosing a site which local communities associated with heritage activities, and it was a space which all ages and backgrounds saw as being "theirs". Each Centre was given some leeway in defining communities. The *Voices* Centre adopted six broad categories of community: elective communities (interest group), communities of practice (teachers, archivists, curators, social enterprise), of place (village), of space (school) and of age (youth group)[9]. Each of these represented different publics.

Between 2014 and 2019 the Centre worked with 185 community groups, of which thirty-five were communities of colour, organised over 400 engagement

[8] I. Grosvenor, N. Gauld, *The role of commemoration in history and heritage: the legacy of the World War One Engagement Centres*, in M. Keynes, H. Åström Elmersjö, D. Lindmark, B. Norlin (edd.), *Historical Justice and History of Education*, London, Palgrave, 2021, pp. 153-176.

[9] E. Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; knowledge production through the vehicle of communities of practice was evident in the community projects which the Voices Engagement Centre facilitated, see the e-book series *Beyond Commemoration: Community Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War*, Birmingham, 2020 <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/2021/12/13/resource-beyond-commemoration-community-collaboration-and-legacies-of-the-first-world-war/> (last access: 11.01.2024).

events and funded seventeen community research projects[10]. The engagement events happened around the country, were often focused on the Centre's lead themes, involved collaborations with artists, museums and other civic society mediators and were often presented by community activists. Each of the seventeen funded community research projects were jointly led by an academic and a community activist and were co-produced and co-designed. From the outset each project established principles and values and discussed the importance of trust, equity, inclusion, accountability, and mutual understanding. Each of the projects generated new knowledge about the conflict through the participatory turn[11]. Collectively the Engagement Centres enabled academics, heritage practitioners, community enterprises, and community volunteers to come together in meaningful and productive relationships.

In 2020 two of the First World War Engagement Centres jointly secured additional funding from the AHRC to review the legacy of centenary commemorations[12]. Rather than memorialise community research the Centres chose to keep it in circulation by working with communities to produce legacy themed e-books that addressed gaps in historical understanding or poorly represented topics. *Children and Conflict* addressed both. During the Centenary considerable emphasis was placed on young people as a key audience – the desire to inspire a new generation in order that the conflict's legacies could be carried forward was central to the commemorative vision. Numerous projects were designed to engage children and young people, yet the stories told were in the main those of adults, in projects defined and managed by other adults. A project that sprung directly from the interests of young people and was funded by the NLHF was *Who Cared for Kids*? Investing in Children (IiC), a community interest company in the north of England, worked with a group of young people, some of whom had experiences of the care system while others had worked with social services and other family-based organisations. The IiC was founded upon the belief that young people's voices should be heard and that they should determine activities and policies that impacted upon their world. The group undertook research training and then tried to uncover through archival research the uncharted lives of cared for children during the war. They also explored how young people's experiences of the war were presented in

[10] See *Voices of War and Peace, Voices Projects*, Last updated: n.d., <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/voices-projects/> (last access: 12.10.2023).

[11] See I. Grosvenor, *Gemeinschaften miteinander verbinden: Neues Wissen durch Zusammenarbeit schaffen*, «Pädagogische Rundschau», vol. 5, n. 76, 2022, pp. 549-564. Collectively the Centres supported over 500 community projects, achieved over a million hits on Centre websites and attracted over 250,000 visitors to Centre exhibitions.

[12] *Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War*, AHRC Follow-on-Funding for Impact and Engagement, Reference AH/V001329/1.

local and national museums. Information and the absences found were shared with others through an activity box and school visits[13].

The young people involved in *Who Cared for Kids*? and the IiC later became partners in producing the e-book *Children and Conflict*. Through a workshop and online conversations the young researchers reaffirmed the importance of placing children at the centre of the conflict and giving them a voice in history. Their ideas and participation helped determine the structure of the e-book, the importance of using visual evidence and the identification of five other case study NHLF history projects that were devised, executed, and delivered by that same age group[14]. Why was it that relatively few youth groups engaged with the commemorative process? As Rachel Duffett, the academic lead on the e-book, commented:

> It is an absence that speaks to the connections that have not been made. When social groups cannot locate their own experiences in what have been constructed as the definitive repositories of the nation's wartime lives, there is little to generate interest and promote engagement.

Central to the success of *Who Cared for Kids?* was giving voice and agency to the young researchers – «something of a novelty in the crowded historiography of the conflict». The other project case studies in the e-book give a voice «to not only the unheard of the past, but also to those of the present whose power to shape history has traditionally been limited»[15].

3. *Public Participation and Research: towards an incomplete genealogy*

In this second part of this article the focus shifts to documenting the emergence of participatory research involving a range of communities engaged with formal and informal educative initiatives. 1897 is a good place to start. Sir Benjamin Stone (1838-1914), Birmingham industrialist, Member of Parliament, amateur photographer, and collector, announced the formation of the National Photographic Record Association (NPRA) and that «through the help of the photographic societies of Great Britain and Ireland» the NPRA would undertake a photographic survey of the nation. Its purpose being to record for the future the historic buildings, antiquities and folk customs and thereby foster «a

[13] R. Duffett, R. Johnson, *Introduction: Who Cared for Kids*, in R. Duffett (ed.), *Children and Conflict*, Birmingham, University of Birmingham and AHRC, 2020, pp. 12-15.

[14] J. Hay, E. Smith, J. Smith, E. Furness, V. Furness, C.J. Odaranile, A. Spry, K. Spry, *Children just don't sit centre stage in life: images as objects to think through*, in Duffett, *Children and Conflict*, cit., pp. 16-25.

[15] Duffett, Johnson, *Introduction*, cit., p. 15.

national pride in the historical associations of the country, or neighbourhood, in family traditions, or in personal associations»[16]. Technological innovations in the 1880s had made the practice of photography simpler and many people were attracted to it as a hobby. Amateur photographic societies proliferated, and specialist magazines encouraged photographers to engage in capturing images of the present and images of the past[17]. From this emerged the survey movement, the NPRA and the creation of a national visual archive of the disappearing past and present. Exhibitions were mounted, and lectures and talks given. Collectively the past was being saved for future publics, but it was largely due to the actions of middle-class men who were amateur photographers.

Move north to Edinburgh at the turn of the 20th century and the biologist, sociologist, geographer, and urban planner Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) was arguing for the importance of seeing life as a whole. Of recognising the interconnections of place, work, and family with the ecological, social, geological, historical, and cultural. He encouraged Edinburgh citizens to think global and act local. For Geddes, sustainable societal change was dependent upon the evolutionary potential of local citizens. Citizens who would directly engage in identifying alternatives, options, and possible city futures[18]. Interestingly, Geddes attended the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900 where the sociologist and civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) presented, as part of the *Exposition des Nègres d'Amérique*, a series of data visualizations, or infographics, dedicated to the progress made by African Americans since the Emancipation in 1863. In delivering these infographics Du Bois had previously established a network of field researchers, black alumni both female and male, to gather data. Also, Black Southern photographers collected visual images to support Du Bois's sociological findings and his own students analysed data on the black community and race relations and helped to produce the visualisations[19]. An early example of disenfranchised communities participating in looking at the past, reflecting on the present, working collaboratively, and engaging in research[20].

16 «The Times» quoted in E. Edwards, P. James, M. Barnes, *A Record of England. Sir Benjamin Stone & The National Photographic Record Association, 1897-1910*, Stockport, Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2006, p. 5. See also *National Photographic Record Association*, «The Amateur Photographer», April 19, 1897, p. 222.

17 Edwards, James, Barnes, *A Record of England*, cit., pp. 9-11.

18 N. Hysler-Rubin, *Patrick Geddes and Town Panning: A Critical View*, London, Routledge, 2011; see also The Oval Partnership, *The Living City – The Rise And Fall, And Rise Again Of Sir Patrick Geddes*, Last updated: June 30, 2020, https://www.ovalpartnership.com/en/article/item/The-Living-City-The-Rise-and-Fall-and-Rise-Again-of-Sir-Patrick-Geddes (last access: 20.03.2023).

19 W. Battle-Baptiste, B. Rusert, *Introduction*, in Idd. Rusert (edd.), *W. E. B. Du Bois's Data Portraits. Visualizing Black America*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2018, pp. 13-19; A. Morris, *American Negro in Paris*, 1900, in Battle-Baptiste, Rusert, *W. E. B. Du Bois's Data Portraits*, cit., p. 27.

20 T. Wakeford, J. Sanchez Rodriguez, *Participatory Action Research: Towards a More Fruitful*

Move forward in time to the 1930s and public opinion about contemporary issues is a growing field of activity, and one that becomes formalised as a professional and academic discipline. In 1937 Mass Observation, a social research organisation was founded by the anthropologist Tom Harrison (1911-1976), the film-maker Humphrey Jennings (1907-1950) and the poet and journalist Charles Madge (1912-1996). Their aim was to create an "anthropology of ourselves", a study of the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain and its many communities[21]. They recruited a team of observers and a panel of volunteer writers to study and write about the everyday and specific events and issues across Britain. People's behaviour and conversations were recorded in as much detail as possible.

Rooted in the political context of the 1930s, Mass Observation had a political desire to contribute to achieving social change by giving voice to the experiences of ordinary people[22]. For many of the volunteer observers, participation was driven by a desire for self-education and an understanding of contemporary events and a significant number also participated in other informal educative initiatives such as the Left Book Club[23]. Although led by Harrison and Madge, two men who hailed from a socially and educationally elite class position, some of the Mass Observation investigators employed by Harrison in his original *Worktown* project in Bolton came from very different social, educational and political backgrounds and saw participation in the project as a means to engage in radical forms of knowledge production and historical research. Albert Smith, for example, was an anarchist and Workers' Educational Association (WEA) tutor who in 1937 established an adult education class on the *History of the People of Bolton from 1900 to 1937*, in which he challenged accepted historical methods and encouraged students to focus on their own life experiences as part of developing a critical history that encompassed «a new way of studying ourselves»[24]. Although Mass Observation as originally conceived came to an end in 1949, it produced a series of books about its work as well as short reports. Data were eventually archived and later made available for new research in 1975[25].

Knowledge, Bristol, University of Bristol and AHRC Connected Communities Programme, 2018, p. 23.

21 C. Madge, T. Harrison, *Mass-Observation*, London, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1937, p. 10, available from Adam Matthew Digital Ltd., Mass Observation Online, 2023, <https://www-massobservation-amdigital-co-uk.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Detail/mass-observation/19599292?item=19599318> (last access: 12.10.2023).

22 P. Summerfield, *Mass-Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?*, «Journal of Contemporary History», vol. 20, 1985, pp. 439-452; J. Hinton, *The Mass Observers: A History, 1937-1949*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

23 Summerfield, *Mass-Observation: Social research or Social Movement?*, cit.

24 Quoted in Hinton, *The Mass Observers*, cit., p. 20.

25 A second phase of activity was launched in 1981, see D. Sheridan, *"Ordinary Hardworking Folk": Volunteer Writers in Mass Observation, 1937-50 and 1981-91*, «Feminist Praxis», vol. 37-

In the same decade that Mass Observation encouraged ordinary people to document their lives and opinions, regional radio programmes based in Manchester had begun to utilise actuality featuring working-class voices on the BBC[26]. In the 1950s the advent of the portable EMI midget tape recorder enabled the Birmingham based radio features producer Charles Parker to build on these early beginnings when he developed his series of *Radio Ballads* broadcast between 1958 and 1964[27]. Produced in collaboration with folk singer, songwriter and playwright Ewan MacColl and the American musician Peggy Seeger, the ballads combined folk songs with interview actuality recorded in working class communities such as the fishing and coal mining communities featured in *Singing the Fishing* (1960) or *The Big Hewer* (1961), or often marginalised communities such as in *The Travelling People* (1964), *The Body Blow* (1962) which featured the voices of people disabled by polio, or *On the Edge* (1963) which focused on the experienced of teenagers. With his background in the Communist Party and the politically inspired Theatre Workshop group in the 1930s and 1940s, MacColl's political views would influence Parker's outlook and this, together with the experience of meeting and recording working people, would take him on a journey that he described a moving from «a liberal bourgeois journalist» to «a socialist artist»[28]. He also worked or corresponded with key cultural figures on the British Left including Richard Hoggart, Arnold Wesker, Stewart Hall and E.P Thompson, and shared the common concern of the period about the dilution of British working-class culture by American popular culture[29].

Parker's method of working was to generate hours of actuality from conversations that he believed were authentic carriers of working-class speech and experiences, that would then be selected and edited with the folksongs to produce the ballad. In this way, he argued in the *Radio Times* in 1958, he was «relying upon the real people… to tell their story simply and directly»[30]. The oral historian Alun Howkins has maintained that this was part of the historical value of the programmes, arguing that «as public history they brought the everyday experiences of men (and to a much lesser extent women) into the forefront of their plots and argument»[31]. Despite acknowledging their significance in giving an element of narrative authority to the voices of working-class people, he and others have justifiably critiqued the early ballads in particular for

38, 1993, pp. 1-34.

[26] A. Howkins, *History and the Radio Ballads*, «Oral History», vol. 28, n. 2, 2000, pp. 89-93.

[27] Charles Parker's vast archive is held by Birmingham Archives and Collections and includes paper production documentation and audio actuality recordings, collection reference MS 4000.

[28] Quoted in P. Long, *British radio and the politics of culture in post-war Britain: the work of Charles Parker*, «The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media», vol. 2, n. 3, 2004, pp. 131-52, here p. 134.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Quoted in Long, *British radio and the politics of culture in post-war Britain*, cit., p. 136.

[31] Howkins, *History and the Radio Ballads*, cit., p. 93.

their mediated quality, and for presenting a very particular and anonymised collective representation of a predominantly masculine working-class culture as socialist realism[32]. By the mid-1960s Parker was consciously identifying with the movement for "history from below", attending Labour history conferences and participating in overtly historical recovery projects such as *The Long March of Everyman* for the BBC in the early 1970s[33]. Interestingly in 1964-65 Parker initiated a project entitled *Landmarks* which, like Television History Workshop later, aimed to historically represent key milestones in a life through a series of programmes that followed a similar methodology to the radio ballads, the second of which featured *The School*[34]. In this way he presaged many of the developments that are the focus of the section that follows.

4. *Participation, radical pluralities and "Making History"*

From the late 1960s the History Workshop movement emerged to democratise participation in history stimulated by the particular political context of the decade in Britain[35]. Connected to the concepts of "history from below", it drew intellectual stimulation from historians and others associated with the political and intellectual ideas of the New Left such as E.P. Thompson and Stuart Hall, and historians involved in the Communist Party Historians Group[36]. The early workshops were held at Ruskin College, the institutional home of Raphael Samuel, arguably the historian most closely associated with the workshop[37]. Initially focused on the marginalisation of working class histories, the workshops gradually expanded to include women's histories, particularly with the advent of the feminist movement of the 1970s, and also led to the foundation of the «History Workshop Journal» from 1976. In the same period movements that shared similar aims of increasing plurality and participation in historical research were also emerging in other European contexts such as Germany and Sweden[38].

[32] Id., *History and the Radio Ballads*, cit., p. 92. See also P. Long, *Only in the Common People: The Aesthetics of Class in Post-War Britain*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, particularly chapter 4, pp. 137-174.

[33] Long, *Only in the Common People*, cit., pp. 162-163.

[34] See Birmingham Archives and Collections, MS 4000/2/103.

[35] B. Taylor, *History of History Workshop*, Last updated: November 22, 2012, <https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/museums-archives-heritage/the-history-of-history-workshop/> (last access: 30.03.2023).

[36] *Ibid*.; Myers, Grosvenor, *Collaborative Research: History from Below*, cit., p. 19.

[37] For a discussion of Samuel's ideas and participation in the movement see S. Scott-Brown, *The Histories of Raphael Samuel: A Portrait of a People's Historian*, Acton, ANU Press, 2017.

[38] Lindenberger, Wildt, *Radical Plurality: History Workshops as a Practical Critique of Knowledge*, cit.

In 1978 in Sweden Sven Lindqvist, a wide-ranging social commentator, provocative essayist, and historian who focused on questions of social justice, environmentalism, colonialism, war, and racism published *Gräv där du står: Hur man utforskar ett jobb* (Dig Where You Stand). Lindqvist's agenda was to provide a text that would empower workers to engage in researching and writing their own history and thereby expose «elitist and exclusionary practices of history-making» and democratise knowledge production. The book reflected Lindqvist's view that «doing history» could help achieve «social, political and industrial change». It is instructive in form and shows how every reader can systematically research the history of their place of work, critically use a range of sources and pose and pursue critical research questions[39]. For Andrew Flinn and Astrid Von Rosen, the editors of the recent and first English edition, *Dig Where You Stand* is more than a manual, «it can be better understood as an instigator and motivator of activism … a directly instructive agent … [with] a clear sense of political engagement and change»[40]. The Swedish *Dig Where You Stand* became the core text of the popular Dig Where You Stand Movement, with hundreds of thousands of Swedes joining local study circles. The latter were a legacy of the Swedish *Arbetarnas Bildningsf rbund* (Workers' Education Association) established in 1912 and were characterised by non-hierarchical structures and were democratic, voluntary, and free spaces for discussion[41]. The exact number of Dig Where You Stand study circles that were created in Sweden was estimated in 2014 as being over 10,000. The study circles' research was translated into hundreds of books, pamphlets, theatre performances, and exhibitions, the latter involving some 1,300 Swedish «museums of working life»[42]. The Swedish text was translated into Danish, French, German and Norwegian and Lindquist produced summary texts in English which were published in the «Oral History» journal in 1979, in the edited book *Our Common History* (1982) and in US radical history journals[43]. The book and its associated activities connected directly with the international "history from below" movement and the History Workshop movement. What Lindqvist's book offered and encouraged was, in Gareth Evans words, «engaged

[39] See A. Flinn, A. von Rosen, *An Introduction to the Long-Awaited English Translation of Dig Where You Stand,* in S. Lindqvist, *Dig Where You Stand,* London, Repeater Books, 2023, pp. 2-7.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[41] This approach was very different to that of the UK Workers' Education Association which organised university tutorial classes to foster mutual learning and fellowship between intellectuals and workers. See J. Jansson, *Class Formation in Sweden and Britain: Education Workers*, «International Labor and Working-Class History», vol. 90, 2016, pp. 52-69.

[42] S. Lindqvist, *Dig Where You Stand Movement*, in D. Coghlan, M. Brydon-Miller (edd.), *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Action Research*, London, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2014, pp. 265-266.

[43] Id., *Dig Where You Stand*, «Oral History», vol. 7, n. 2, 1979, pp. 24-30; S. Lindqvist, *Dig Where You* Stand, in P. Thompson, N. Burkhardt (edd.), *Our Common History: The Transformation of Europe*, London, Pluto Books, 1982, pp. 322-330.

collaboration»[44]. Mass participation in the researching and writing of public history was the result of this engaged collaboration.

In 1981 an independent television producer and journalist Greg Lanning drew inspiration from both the History Workshop movement and from Sven Lindqvist's *Dig Where You Stand* to develop a suite of historical participatory programmes under the banner of *Television History Workshop,* eventually broadcast in partnership with Channel 4. Lanning was a documentary film maker who had worked for the United Nations in Africa and authored a history critiquing the social, economic and political impact of mining companies on Africa[45]. An early iteration of the proposal for the series was threaded throughout with quotes from Lindqvist and also cited Charles Parker's radio work and *The Long March of Everyman* as influences. Lanning's proposal articulated his mission to bring History Workshop's ethos of «a history from below built on the experience of ordinary men and women» to bear on television, and thereby «democratise the whole process of recording history»[46]. Hitherto it argued, the medium had offered closed programmes that presented a passive audience with an authorised version of history. In contrast *Television History Workshop* would construct a new broadcast social history of Britain in the twentieth century, a history that would be underpinned by debate, audience participation, and a critical interrogation of historical sources. The aim was to encourage informed reflection on contemporary concerns and to «bring the past into the present and connect the present with its past»[47].

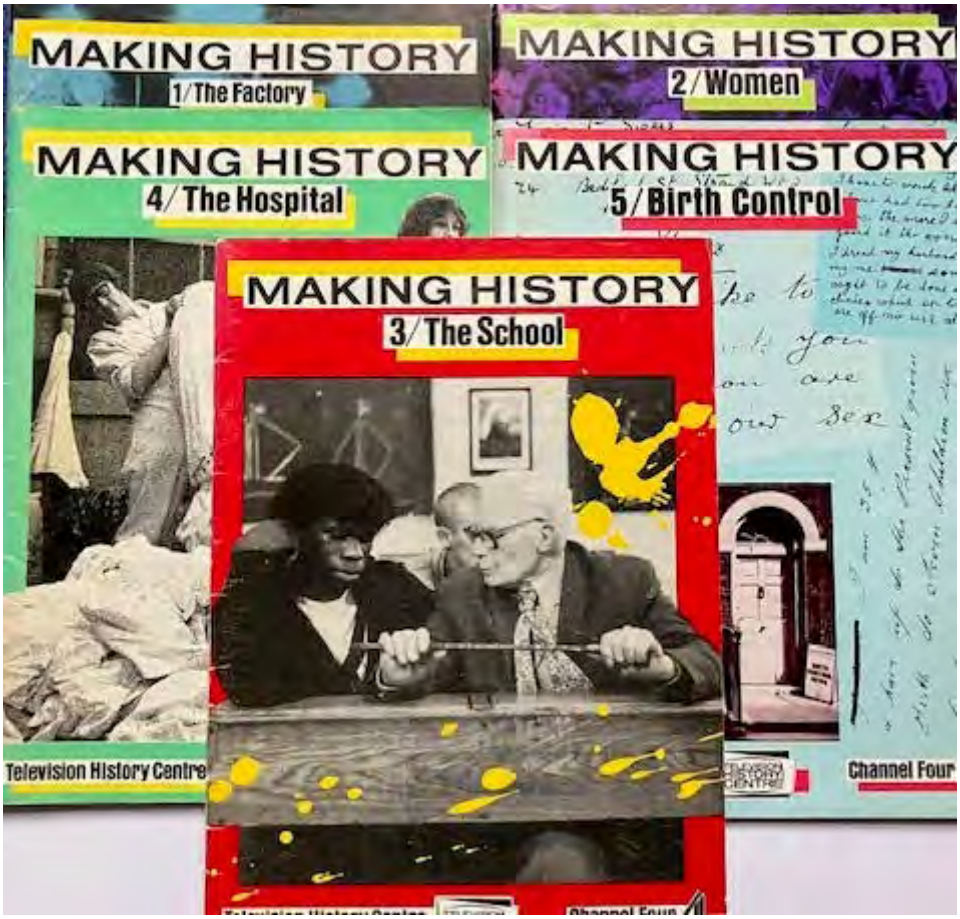
Following months of development that included Samuel and other historians connected to History Workshop, the first in the *Making History* series was finally broadcast on the newly founded British independent television channel, Channel 4, in January 1983. This first programme, very much in the Lindqvist workers' history model, was a history of the Cowley car factory in Oxford. Entitled *Making Cars*, it was accompanied by a book of the same name. To encourage participation, a shop was opened in Cowley's main shopping district into which people were invited to record oral histories and contribute memories and personal or family documents. This method of establishing a participative space in the locality was followed for later programmes in the series. Each broadcast programme was also accompanied by a short booklet that provided context and helpful guidance on aspects of historical research methodology and aimed to inspire the audience to undertake their own research as a follow-up activity. Five programmes and associated *Making History* booklets were produced as part of the series over the course of the next few years and

[44] G. Evans, *Afterword: After Words, Actions*, in Lindqvist, *Dig Where You Stand*, cit., p. 389.

[45] G. Lanning, M. Mueller, *Africa Undermined: a history of the mining companies and the underdevelopment of Africa*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1979; Curriculum vitae for Greg Lanning, [1981], Raphael Samuel Papers, Bishopsgate Library, RS7/104.

[46] Draft proposal, [c. 1982], Raphael Samuel Papers, Bishopsgate Library, RS7/104.

[47] Draft proposal, [c. 1982], Raphael Samuel Papers, Bishopsgate Library, RS7/104.



Pic. 1. The five *Making History* booklets that were published to accompany the Television History Workshop programmes on Channel Four

evidence suggests that they were used by schools, colleges, adult education and local history groups as a means of extending the pedagogic aims of the initial broadcast[48]. As schooling was a significant stage in the life course, counter-histories of education featured prominently in the series. The second programme *Woman to Woman* (accompanied by the booklet *Making History 2*: *Women*), for example, included a focus on campaigns by black parents led by Jean Bernard against institutional racism in the British education system. This

48 Raphael Samuel Papers, Bishopsgate Library, RS7/104. The booklets produced by Television History Centre in association with Channel 4 are: *Making History 1*: *The Factory*, M*aking History 2*: *Women, Making History 3*: *School*, *Making History 4*: *The Hospital*, *Making History 5*: *Birth Control.*

was followed by the third programme, *Hooligans or Rebels*, which focused on resistance to schooling working with a group of truant or unschoolable kids. It was accompanied by *Making History 3: The School* which encouraged people to research the history of their local school and suggested practical research approaches using visual sources, oral history, school records and dramatisation.

Lindquist, History Workshop, and Television History Workshop exemplify the extension of conceptualisations and understandings of public history identified by Hilda Keen and Paul Ashton, from a focus primarily «on the form and nature of transmission, [to]… explor[ing] the idea of how the past becomes history»[49]. In the former, as Kean elaborated elsewhere, the academic historian is cast in the active role of creator of the historical narrative whilst the public is positioned in the passive role of consumer, with the result that the nature of historical practice as a discipline remains largely unquestioned[50]. Advocating a «participatory historical culture» Kean argued for a recognition of the public as active agents in the creation of history produced through a methodology of participation and engagement that focused on conceptual and disciplinary processes in addition to content[51].

In the 21st century the emergence of digital history has brought new and different opportunities for communities to engage in participatory research[52]. *History Unfolded. US Newspapers and the Holocaust*, for example, is a project of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Information about Nazi persecution of Jews and others was available to broad segments of the US public as it happened. The project begun in 2016 involved individuals and communities investigating newspaper archives online and in libraries to find out what Americans could have known about the Holocaust, how Americans responded, and then submitting articles to a national database. As of April 17, 2023, 6,211 participants from across the country had submitted more than 68,400 articles from their local newspapers[53]. An example of a participatory project where ordinary people engaged in «answering authentic questions based on authoritative research» while «being open to… new ideas, questions, and ways of thinking»[54].

[49] H. Kean, P. Ashton, *Introduction: People and their Pasts and Public History Today*, in P. Ashton, H. Kean (edd.), *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 1-20, here p. 1.

[50] H. Kean, *People, Historians, and Public History: Demystifying the Process of History Making*, «The Public Historian», vol. 32, n. 3, 2010, pp. 25-38.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[52] See T. Cauvin, *Public History. A Textbook of Practice*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2022, chapter 5.

[53] See History Unfolded, Last updated: n.d., https://newspapers.ushmm.org/about/project (last access: 17.04.2023).

[54] E. Frankle, Making History with the Masses: Citizen History and Radical Trust in Museums, Last updated: April 4, 2013, <https://archive.mith.umd.edu/mith-2020/index.html%3Fp=10277.html> (last accessed: 17.04. 2023).

5. *Reflections on the past and future of public[ly] engaged history*

What has been offered here is a genealogy of public engagement with the past. It is necessarily incomplete given the space to document it, and because there is still more to be unearthed and identified. Of course, genealogies are of necessity constructed, an act of the human imagination producing a past for the present, and an act of interpretive history reflective of the historian's need to tell stories of origin. Nevertheless, to place the "participatory turn" in a socio-historical context here helps us to illuminate the issues that public[ly] engaged history has faced in the past, the present and will face in possible futures.

It could be argued that the "participatory turn" as experienced in recent years «is necessarily also a return of sorts to the ideas and ideologies of the 1960s, an era in which participatory demands were backed by influential and radical political movements», as one of the original arguments for participation was «giving voice to the subaltern and expanding political equality by expanding social and economic equality»[55]. There is also an argument that a concern for community and culture has replaced society as the horizon of contemporary politics[56]. This is reflected in the growing interest in the agenda of adopting a cultural learning approach to community engagement[57].

A significant question that remains is why has such collaborative work in the past been forgotten? The answers are complex, and some necessarily reflect the particularities of individual circumstances and context. However, we can posit some suggestions drawn from the examples above. By their nature some initiatives were small in scale and often focused on specific local communities. Such participatory research projects are always products of specific temporal circumstances, settings, and geographic particularities; of concerns, demands and aspirations that were place specific in development. Whilst this encourages positive characteristics of participation such as ownership, freedom, autonomy, and self-organisation, it can also mean that knowledge is produced in isolation and without connecting to other projects in a shared (re)telling of a broader historical narrative. Such participatory initiatives are often dependent on volunteers or on funding that is temporally bound, and consequently difficult to sustain when the money comes to an end or are vulnerable to disruption by change whether as a result of economic, humanitarian or environmental crises, or simply from a loss of key personnel or interest[58].

[55] M. Krivý, T. Kaminer, *Introduction: The Participatory Turn in Urbanism*, «Footprint», vol. 13, 2013, pp. 1-6, <https://journals.open.tudelft.nl/footprint/article/view/KrivyKaminer/942> (last accessed: 17.04. 2023).

[56] B. Buden, cited in Krivý and Kaminer, *Introduction*, cit., p. 5.

[57] See K. Myers, I. Grosvenor, *Cultural learning and historical memory: A research agenda*, «Encounters on Education», vol. 15, 2014, pp. 3-21; F. Herman, S. Roberts, *Adventures in cultural learning*, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 53, n. 3, 2017, pp. 189-198.

[58] See also *5. Challenges and Barriers* in AHRC, *By All, For All: The Power of Partnership*,

We have seen a greater degree of community activism as a result of growing concerns over global crises and a reaching out to the disenfranchised to promote research *with* not *on* communities as part of a greater focus on social justice. The emphasis is on producing history *for* the public, *by* the public and the pluralising of knowledge through engagement and collaboration[59]. That said such activities – in the US, France, Hungary, Poland, India and the UK – have provoked the right and the emergence of conservative nationalism as a new form of populism, with the refusal to engage with facts that are well-known but emotionally and politically inconvenient, and with other experiences that are devastating to the collective self-regard of huge segments of societies that have no visible desire to come to terms with reality – the ongoing culture wars.

Generally, it remains the case that received ideas about the past remain particularly strong and as the historian David Andress has forcefully argued there is «an actively constructed, jealously guarded toxic refusal to engage with facts that are well-known but emotionally and politically inconvenient, and with other experiences that are devastating to the collective self-regard of huge segments of societies that have no visible desire to come to terms with reality»[60]. To address this requires academics to reach out and build sustainable relationships with different publics and for universities to recognise how Eurocentric norms legitimise particular forms of knowledge and pedagogy. It is about pluralising knowledge through engagement and collaboration. In the UK this requires institutions to engage in the process of decolonising and at the same time address the legacy and violence of Empire, activities which have led to cries of wokeism and accusations of rewriting history[61]. Nevertheless, knowing and acting, as Paulo Freire described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, are intimately connected, and as Keri Facer and Kate Pahl write «critical reflection on the world can and does open up opportunities to change it»[62]. Engagement and collaboration can reframe, reimagine and redefine the past in the present and produce different futures as long as, to paraphrase Raphael Samuel «[Public] History [remains] a collaborative enterprise, one in which the researcher, the archivist, the curator and the teacher, the 'do-it-yourself' enthusiast and the

Last updated: 2023, <https://www.creativecommunities.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/By-All-For-All-The-Power-of-Partnerships-Creative-Communities.pdf> (last access: 04.10.2023).

[59] See *The Dig Live, What Now? Perspectives on the Conjuncture Socialism*, Last updated: September 4, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7skTDBWH3E> (last access: 12.10.2023).

[60] D. Andress, *Cultural Dementia: How the West Has Lost Its History, and Risks Losing Everything Else*, London, Head of Zeus, 2018, p. 47.

[61] See I. Grosvenor, *Populism, Nationalism and the Past. An English story of History in the Present*, «Rizoma», vol. 31, 2021, <http://www.rizoma-freireano.org/articles-3131/populism-nationalism> (last access: 12.10.2023).

[62] P. Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London, Continuum, 1970; K. Facer, K. Pahl, *Introduction*, in K. Facer, K. Pahl (edd.), *Valuing Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research*, Bristol, Policy Press, 2017, p. 5.

local historian, the family history societies and the individual archaeologist, [are] regarded as equally [publicly] engaged»[63].

[63] R. Samuel (ed.), *History Workshop: a collecteana, 1967-1991, documents, memoirs, critique and cumulative index to History Workshop Journal*, Oxford, Ruskin College, 1991, p. IV.