



## History in and beyond the classroom: Practicing public history as project-based learning

Hosted by Prof. Thomas Cauvin

Associate Professor of Public History at the University of Luxembourg

Part of the webinar series

"No Books Required: History Outside of the Classroom"



[00:00:00] **Alice:** Hello everyone. And welcome to the first session of our webinar series on "History Outside of the Classroom: No Textbooks Required". I'm very, very happy to welcome you back after the summer and to kickstart our new academic year with a webinar series that will take us outside of the classroom and into history.

[00:00:23] My name is Alice Modena. I am Professional Development Coordinator and Deputy Director at EuroClio. I will be the facilitator for today. Today's speaker would be professor Thomas Cauvin who is Associate Professor of Public History at the University of Luxembourg.

[00:00:38] We're very, very happy that he accepted to host our session today. And I would really like to just give you the floor: the floor is yours.

[00:00:48] **Thomas:** Thank you, Alice. And thank you everybody for attending. I see people from very different part of the world and from part of Europe. That great.

[00:00:55] So thank you for spending some of your summertime with me tonight, I'm very honored to be speaking tonight. And again, I would like to thank Alice for the very kind invitation to speak tonight. So I will share a few slides. All right.

[00:01:11] So I, I wrote that title: History in and beyond the Classroom: practicing Public History as Project Based Learning. I think gonna start with explaining a bit more what Public History is, or at least what I think public history is, and then move into more practical examples.

[00:01:30] So I'm based at the university of Luxembourg. I've been there for two years, I'm French, and I think I'm gonna start by saying this: I started as a history teacher. (I am) still history teacher, but I started as a school teacher. It was like 20 years ago. So I was teaching history and geography in France.

[00:01:50] And I think that's actually the first time I found out about Public History. I was in an exchange with a colleague from Quebec and she was doing Public History in the classroom and outside the classroom. And I thought it was very enriching, very cool and very fun to do.

[00:02:07] So that was actually my first encounter with Public History. Some other things about what I do. I really do international collaboration. So I'm French, but I've been working with, with Italians. I've been working with, with Irish (people) and I spent the last 10 years in the United States, where I have practiced Public History.

[00:02:28] Because 10 years ago, public history was not a thing in Europe.

[00:02:32] I'm not saying it's a thing now, but at least it's more widespread and it was 10 years ago. So I went to the US and taught and practiced Public History. And as you're gonna see, what I like in Public History is that we can, you know, **learn by doing**.

[00:02:47] It's not a curse. For some of my colleagues learning by doing is not a thing. I completely disagree. And I will show you a few of my student project that we've done in the past few years.

[00:03:00] I also think that a History teacher should **collaborate more with other types of teacher, other types of experts**. So I'm gonna explain how I collaborate with some people from the media studies or some people from the communication theater, to see how together we can have a richer project for our students.

[00:03:21] And, last but not least, (I am) by no means an expert in pedagogy or didactics. Some people are, I am not. What I can show is a few of the Public History project and how they might help teaching history in schools or in universities.

[00:03:37] But first: **what is Public History?**

[00:03:39] That's a question that my mother keeps asking me every year. So the question is what does that mean? Public History? When the words were used for the first time, the 1970s in the United States, it was defined at *history beyond the classroom*. And I think it fits this, this webinar pretty well about history beyond the classroom.

[00:04:02] What I think Public History is, is more than that. *For me, Public History is making history more public*. And I'm gonna try to explain what I mean by "making history more public". So when my students asked me a few years ago to define Public History I came up with this metaphor of a tree. Because for me doing **Public History, it's a way of doing history, right?**

[00:04:28] It's history, but it's a specific way of doing history. And I think that tree encapsulates some of what I think is important in Public History. So on that tree, you see the Roots. For me, *the roots is the collection, the preservation of sources or everything coming from the past*. That could be the preservation of a building, that could be archives, that could be oral history. So collecting sources from the past. The *trunk*, which is the main activity for historians is *interpreting sources*. So what we are also asking our students in the classroom to *use documents from the past and to make sense of those documents*, but where public history I think goes further is into the branches that you see on the slide.

[00:05:17] *The branches are the many ways we can communicate history to a larger public.* So we can do that by books, by journal, by articles,... But more and more historians and students use podcasts, or exhibitions, or social media, or even video games to communicate history, to communicate their work.

[00:05:39] And I think this is one of the most dynamic part of Public History: **using different kind of media to make history more public, more accessible**. So that's something that I'm very keen in my students to learn: how can you communicate your work through a blog, or through a comic, right? Not everything is easy. Nothing is easy, some medium are more difficult than others, but that's the deal: *enlarging the range of medium that we can use to communicate history*.

[00:06:08] *And the leaves are, in the tree, the multiple uses of the past.* And not all uses are equal. So you can use history for empowering groups. You can use history for education. But you can also use history for fun or for marketing, right? And I think that those users are very important for our students to understand how history is in the public space, right? 'Cause we, we tend to think that history is only about the education, but the way history is used in the public space is very broad and very varied. So this is something we need to consider as historians, but also when we teach public history.

[00:06:48] So "making history more public" for me, it's **making history more accessible** so that you have to rely on things other than journal and articles, right? Doing video, doing a podcast about, about history.

[00:07:04] It's also increasing public participation and that's something that I've been trying to, to do with my students, to make my students work with communities, with museums archives,.... And those people may have (a) very different understanding of the past or very different understanding of history.

[00:07:19] So this is a challenge, but this is something very important: making history, more collaborative. So, this is how I came up with this public HisTree to try to show at the beginning of the year to my students. What I mean by public history. And in many ways, this is like old wine in new bottle, because this is not new, right?

[00:07:41] Oral history is not new. History in museums: that's not new, right?. Guided tours: that's not new. But I think the use of public history allows us to train our students, to practice history in the public space. I Always tell my colleagues that *it's not because we are a good researcher - so we know where to go in the archive ...- that we are good communicators*. And many of us historians are not good communicators, right? It was the same when I studied history: I was a good student, but I didn't know how to teach. You need to learn how to teach. It's the same thing to do Public History. **You need to know how to communicate history.**

[00:08:20] So we need training. We need skills for some of our students to work, not only in education, but in museums, in archives or in media production. For example, we have some of our students who do some podcast and media production and, and look for jobs in that, that sphere. So for us, it's also where to diversify the possible careers for our history students.

[00:08:45] Right? So Public History has actually been spreading. So it started in the United States, but now you have associations of Public History in Brazil - very strong also because of the context

of use and abuse of history- but in Spain, Japan, Australia, Italy. And you have this International Federation for Public History.

[00:09:07] So I think it's developing because we have common questions about what's the role of historians today?, or how is history used in different different countries, by different people? I think you are gonna have a webinar about totalitarianism, propaganda.... So this is something we also have in common with history education.

[00:09:27] So it's been rising and now we have Public History in different languages in, in Portuguese, in Italian, in, in Polish. And I think, again, that is not the spread of one model, but how people think they wanna practice and make history more public in different environments.

[00:09:45] So Public History Training. I think I'm moving now into the more training aspect of history in universities. But I think some of the projects can be adapted and can be reused. So why do we need Public History training? First because, as I said, it's not because we're good researchers that we are good teachers or good communicators. We need skills, right?. And this has to be learned, right?. Also because we propose new carriers for history education beyond education, beyond academia, sorry. So you can you can be a history teacher, but you can apply to other kind of jobs. 20 years ago, when I was doing my history education, I was promised "oh, you could work as a journalist. You can work on this and that...". And I was never trained for that. So I never got a job in heritage, tourism or journalism. I think now we're trying to bring skills in the history curriculum that allow our students to apply for those jobs. And also because we need to be part of the public debate in public discussion about the past. *With the internet, the rise of social media, many people have opinions about the past. As an historian I do think we need to be more present and we need to have the skills to be present in the public space.* So that's something that I'm also keen in developing for, for my students.

[00:11:08] Right. So now that the, the bridge is between public history and history education, and there are many bridges, right?

[00:11:14] You see, for example, one of the many books about Public History and Schools, that was published three years ago. It's an open access, so you can just search "Public History and Schools" and you can have access to that book. We see many bridges, especially in **project based learning** and **connecting the classroom with other institutions**.

[00:11:33] So we have different resources. We have this book, we have Public History Weekly, which is a blog journal. Every month, they have new articles. This one was about "Public History Goes to School" with how you can connect the teaching curriculum and museums and practice history and student education in museums.

[00:11:53] But you have other articles about history didactics, which is actually one of the co-partner of public history in, especially in German speaking countries. So you have "Department in Public History and Didactics" very common in Germany, at least. So we have bridges and I wanna focus on some of these bridges in the next few slides.

[00:12:15] So the first thing that Public History aims at doing is to **balance theory and practice**. There is this this saying in the United States when you do public history: you think that in Europe it's all about theories. So they (the Americans) think that European historians they think they think

they think, and they do very little. When I talk to my colleagues in Europe, they think about it the other way, like: "oh, in the US, you do, you do, you do, but you never think". I think there's a nexus here between theory and practice. *Something that we have to be very keen in doing in the classroom: doing some research methodology, like "what is history", "how to study a primary source", but also to do history, to communicate history.*

[00:12:58] That's something that I, that I like to do. And I'm gonna give you more details in the next slide. But this balance between theory and practice is key in Public History. And again: **learning by doing!** It's not like theory and then you have the projects: the projects can be part of the learning, the self-reflection and students learn by doing projects.

[00:13:19] And what I like is at the end of the year, they look at a project and they think: "oh, okay. What does that mean about history in the public space? Or how could I have done better?" So all my courses are project oriented. So, assignments like a guided tour for example. I don't give final essays. I give a, a guided tour, so they have to learn a few skills that will I will detail further.

[00:13:44] So the three pillars in my courses: *always history*, so it's not only communication, right? We're not only studying Twitter and social media. We always have some primary sources. The job of historians. We have this *balance between theory and practice*. And this is also something important, but I will not tell you that because you know about that: the *teamwork*, right?

[00:14:08] This is super important for us, super challenging, but this is a skill that they have to learn, right? Working with partners, also working with people that disagree with, especially when when we go with museums and communities: *how do you work with people that you may disagree with?*

[00:14:24] So this is a soft skill, but a super important skill in public history. So a few examples of projects. I'm gonna show you I think, three examples, four examples that I've done in the last five years and try to explain why I did that, how I succeeded or failed, what didn't work, and try to explain why.

[00:14:45] So the first thing is a project that I was doing in Louisiana in the United States where you had, you still have a very strong French community. As I was French, I started to listen to some of those people (and said) "oh, you have a strong French heritage". So I was trying to do something with my students about preserving the memories and some objects of that French community.

[00:15:08] So what we did was to have this, what we call the history harvest. You see a slide at the bottom with two of my students. WE went to the public library and we organized an event which the members of the community, the French community brought objects, family objects, letters. This guy on the left was bringing letters in French from his mother when he was away.

[00:15:32] Other people brought music, disks, food recipes,.... The idea is to start a collection of objects, materials that tell a story of stories about the French heritage. After the library, we rented this RV, this mobile home that you see on the left. And we went to different villages on one Saturday afternoon, and we had people coming to collect their stories and to record their stories. Again, to collect memories about this French community. So it took a few years cause just driving this mobile home in Louisiana was a, a challenge. But the final result was to have an online collection in which people could gather, could preserve their memories. Sometime they were very

keen to talk and to bring their mothers quite elderly so that they could preserve their, their memories and their objects.

[00:16:24] So it was an attempt, we did, I think it was 2014. It kind of worked, but it was also very challenging in getting people.

[00:16:33] So the, the second project we did was more with the middle school, right? It was a middle school in Louisiana. And the idea was with my colleague in the middle school to bring his students to a retiring home.

[00:16:45] And you see a picture here of a, one of his students interviewing this old Cajun French person about "when you were speaking French at home, with whom you was speaking...". It was a very emotional moment. So obviously there was the preparation in the classroom about what questions to ask and, and how to ask [\(them\)](#).

[00:17:05] This led to the production of a short documentary of 15 minutes with the students to show what speaking French at home was 50 or 60 years ago. And I can send you the link. It's open access. It's 15 minutes, very short, and with subtitles. That's something we did more with the middle school in the local community.

[00:17:28] So, again, going beyond the classroom, that's a very good example. You go to the retirement home, you create connections, people talk, and the kids interview this person, for example. So there, the skills here are about oral history, preservation, but also interviewing people about their past. After those few years, I was trying to be more focused on the skills that my students need to learn.

[00:17:55] Cause the first project was about collecting. The second was about oral history. Then, I wanted to focus more on skills. **What kind of skills do I want my students to have to communicate history?** So can I show you a few examples of what I've tried and again, what worked and what worked less?

[00:18:15] First: podcasting.

[00:18:16] I find podcasting a very very engaging assignments. So the idea is at the end of the semester, they have to make a short podcast in which they have to speak. So: oral skills. And we always forget that - I mean, I, my colleagues and I - forget that oral skills are as important and written skills. So I wanted to develop those oral skills.

[00:18:39] So students have to speak in their podcast, they need to interview someone and I wanted to make things a little bit more complex: they also need to produce the podcast. So it's perhaps to advance for middle school. But we had this introduction about skills and copyrights and script writing.

[00:18:57] I'm gonna explain what we did. So for example they chose the topic and they did some research for a few weeks. And they had to translate the research into a two page document: a script. And the main challenge was for them to write a script that's gonna be spoken.

[00:19:15] So to move from a written assignment - writing is fine, they're used to that - when I asked them to speak and to write for a podcast, that's a very different skills and they were at a loss. So we had a few sessions about how to write a script for short podcasts. We're talking about 10 minutes, which is already quite long but very, very enriching.

[00:19:35] So I provided this free software called Anchor. And we had examples of public history and fiction and they use, for example, "The Crown", a TV show about the queen in the United Kingdom. So they had this about not only what's true and what's not true, but why having an historical fiction about the crown?

[00:19:54] So they chose the topic. We did the research together, they wrote the script and they spoke for between five and 10 minutes about their topic. I think that worked well because they had a final product that they could also share with their, you know, friends and family members. And they had to learn skills like like yeah, public speaking, like editing a podcast, which is not too difficult, but still that's something they can reuse later.

[00:20:23] And again, I will be very happy to share the link, especially the free Anchor platform, which is super easy to use. So I felt a bit confident. So I said: "well, let's, let's make things a bit more difficult. Let's try to produce a short video, right? Does that work? What can work?" So I, I taught that class "public history and documentary film". The idea for my students at the end of the class was to be able to do a short film about their topic.

[00:20:48] So in class we worked with the Media Studies Department about, you know, how to interview someone on screen. So they were working in teams of four and you had someone responsible for recording and basically learning the skills of how do you frame. how do you frame an interview? Right? So you have a few roles. so everyone has a job.

[00:21:12] So there was someone in charge of the recording, someone in charge of the sound, someone in charge of the questions. So that I was trying to do this teamwork. It worked for the, the amount of work. It was very challenging to balance. You know, you always have things to do more than others, and that creates some tension.

[00:21:30] So that was quite difficult to to balance, but overall, they were happy with what they learned. Because we could cover something like you know, pretty complex issues like ethics and copyrights. What kind of document can you use on Google? For example, if you're looking for a picture, what kind of picture can you use on Google?

[00:21:51] So not only using the creative commons, but what is copyrights? And that's super difficult. I mean, after 10 years of working copyrights, I'm still not sure what copyrights are. But having this introduction about "oh, who owns a document?" Or "where is this document" was actually something I didn't expect to be useful for them.

[00:22:12] It turned out they liked that.

[00:22:17] They also liked the fact that at the end of the year, they were able to organize a public screening. So we had five teams of four students, so it was a small classroom and each team has

one theme of between 10 and 50 minutes. And we organized this public screening and the, the room was packed with family members, friends also people from, from the university.

[00:22:38] And they were so proud. They were so proud of showing their, historical project, right?. Instead of making them write an essay and writing is important, but instead of making them write an essay, I ask them to make, to, to produce a film and they were very proud of that. Even the film that were less technically you know good were very well received by, by the audience.

[00:23:02] And that was something that I tried for the first time in 2016 and that I will do again. So I show you one example here about the history of of the campus in the sixties and how it changed during the sixties.

[00:23:19] But COVID happened, so we moved to online teaching and I couldn't teach that class anymore and I had to adapt, but I still wanted to do something about video cause most, I mean, all lessons were logged on at a home. Not, you know, seeing anyone and they could not talk to each other.

[00:23:36] So teamwork was very difficult. So we moved to individual work on a three minute video. So they had a topic, they did some research and they produced this three minute video in which they had to be on. Cause the first film, it was a film about something. In that three minute video, it was about them presenting their topic.

[00:23:56] And the challenge was for them to make it interesting for people to watch it. So they had to work on, on how to speak, but also how fast they speak, because that's something that's a big mistake they always do. They speak too fast. Right? So we had courses also with a colleague who does theater and we had this breathing activity and that's, I know that sounds funny and not teaching material, but breathing and speaking in public was something they had to learn. That we all have to learn. And again, that may not be the ultimate skill we learn in school, but public speaking is sometimes seen as easy, but it's not. And they have the tendency to under evaluate what it takes to speak in public.

[00:24:43] So I really like that with some, you know, up and downs, but some students who were actually first semester, not that good in the writing part, turned out to be much better in those skills. And they were actually happy for once. I mean, not for once, but at least in that class to have more advantage than the, the others.

[00:25:02] So it, we balanced some of the cards that the students had in this classroom and it was surprising. And sometimes it's even surprising how successful we have become. In 2017, so before COVID, I taught that documentary film class, and that was the first time I taught that class. I was a bit at lost. We had no money.

[00:25:22] We had, no, we had one camera for the old group, but there was that student in Louisiana who had this great idea to work on the Creoles of Color. So basically it was about racial segregation in Louisiana. And he did that film that was, you know, technically not super good, but about a topic that then had to be highly political in the United States in 2017.

[00:25:46] And in it turned hard that after two or three years, this this film had like 250000 views which is great. But also is still today as comments from people on the YouTube channel. And something that I didn't expect to teach was basically how can you protect yourself on social media? Cause I was all naive about, oh, let's produce something and let's you know, make sure about the copyrights. But actually answering angry comments, so how do you protect yourself from those people in the YouTube channel, was something that I very quickly had to learn and to, to teach to my students to protect themself from nasty comments.

[00:26:25] So again, that's a skill that I now teach in my course about how to go on some social media and protection on social media when you do public history.

[00:26:39] Right. I have two other projects that I would like to discuss one is in Luxembourg. So I moved to Luxembourg during COVID. So again, it was, it was difficult to start teaching cause online, then hybrid. And hybrid is no less difficult than, than online.

[00:26:57] So what we decided to do with students is to do the history of one neighborhood. So local history,. We chose one neighborhood in the city and we found a wall, this wall that you can see, and the idea of the year project was: okay, let's paint the history of the neighborhood on that wall.

[00:27:18] So we contacted some communities, local communities. We worked with the culture fabric, which is the, well an art institution. And with them, with an artist from Portugal, we launched this project of working with local residents to do their history, to paint the history of that neighborhood on that wall.

[00:27:40] And I also wanted to do that project cause artists are much better historians at dealing with emotions, representing emotions. When I was learning history, emotions was you know, the enemy, oh, don't talk about emotion. Don't feel emotions. You have to be neutral objective and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[00:27:58] That's not what I wanted to do. So with my students we said: how can we show emotions from the local communities on that wall, which was a very optimistic project. But let's see what we did. And again, what worked and what didn't work. First, we use social media. We use social media to collect documents from people, collect photographs from people, to collect emotions about the neighborhood.

[00:28:27] Second, we worked with people, residents, for them to become the experts. So we worked with them to say: "what do you think is the main event from the neighborhood? What do you think is the most important place?" And I can explain the new steps. Then we had the Memorial tour. I can explain. Then had a history harvest, when we bring people, we collect. And then we gave the keys to people, because they had to choose what we proposed to them.

[00:28:54] So let's see how it worked with my students.

[00:28:58] So first we created this Facebook group, nothing fancy, just a Facebook group about this play word on Esch. Esch is the city where I live. So we call this FL'ESCH Back. And we asked people to send us picture about that neighborhood. We have on the left one picture about the

neighborhood in the fifties and the family members, they're gonna explain why this photo is important for us.

[00:29:23] So we got, we got dozens of documents on social media, on FL'ESCH Back. It, it kind of worked, it created the first connection between my students and the local community.

[00:29:35] The second (step) was to organize this meeting between citizen experts. So people who have been living in their neighborhood. it was in a bar, so you can see that's why you have a few beers on the table, but it was also a way to, to get people to come to that event. And the, the idea was for those people, experts who have been living in that neighborhood to find keywords. When they think about the neighborhood, what is important?. So it was about the industry. It was about basketball. It was about the war. It was about bikes. So they had to find keywords that for them embodied the, the neighborhood. And we've used those keywords with my students to try to find some history about basketball, about, about the war, about bikes and so on. So it was the second step: organization of that event.

[00:30:25] The third, still about the history of the neighborhood, was to organize a walk with the artist. So the artist remember was coming still coming from Portugal and with the inhabitants that you can see all over that they had the, we had the tour of the neighborhood and they were telling us, so the students who took notes and the artist, "oh, this happened there", or "this is the former brewery of, of the town", or "this is where there was this accident, very terrible accident in the sixties".

[00:30:54] So this memorial tour that students took note about, recorded, to inspire the artist. Because again, the idea is for the people, the local residents, through us, to inspire the artist, to paint something. Cause the artist had no idea at the beginning, what the history of the neighborhood would be. So the artist was being inspired by this memory tour.

[00:31:20] The fourth step was to, once we had these keywords, these memories, to have a public meeting with the local inhabitants to talk about, "okay, what could that look like on the wall?" So we had workshops in which they had to draw, or they had to bring another picture to tell their opinion about what this wall should be about.

[00:31:42] And again, the artist was there and the role of the students was also to connect those memories to the artist.

[00:31:50] The artist came up with six sketches. So the artist came for a few weeks. Get inspired, objects, talking to people and she produced six sketches. You have three of them here. And the idea was we went in the, in the streets and we asked people to vote for the, this, for the picture that they wanted for the wall.

[00:32:13] So you see there's this ballot, this red thing on the, on the left, where people could drop the envelope. But we also do the, you know, door to door knocking saying "Hey, we have these six designs about the history of the neighborhood, which one would you like?", so we had about 350 votes. And what was good: the students voted to, so we had this ranking about how many votes can you get and so on.

[00:32:36] And it was exciting not to know what people would vote for. So we didn't control that. And the artists came. And decided to paint what was the first vote. So you have here the process. So it was no longer the learning experience for the students. Cause they couldn't take part in painting and painting the fresco.

[00:32:55] But this is an example of a few steps of what it took for the artist to portray what both the residents and the student came with. And this is where the students are. So you can see on the fresco some of the pictures that the students collected through the Facebook. The one on the left is basically the first airport, that someone sent us. It was a picture they sent us, and you can see it on the top, right of the, or top left, sorry of the fresco. And you see, and this was an idea of, of students to oppose the black and white part on the left and the more colorful part on the right, to show how the neighborhood moved from a very rural countryside in their fifties to something very urban today.

[00:33:44] And this is something that people have expressed, but that my students revealed through their work. this opposition between black and white and color was actually something that came up from, from the students. And you also see the picture on the right, which is the picture I showed you on Facebook. It's a family picture that is part of this fresco.

[00:34:04] So we opened the fresco in May and people have been, local resident have been very happy with the result. And I think it was one of the best one for students to see the multiple views. Right? Because if you ask what's the history of the neighborhood, everybody has a different opinion.

[00:34:21] It was now to see something concrete that balances the different options, the different memories, and makes something, at least not coherent, but something well beautiful and something that can represent the neighbourhood. The later discussion with students was: how do you deal with people who disagree?

[00:34:38] People who are very different opinion about, oh, the neighborhood was better before, or no, it's better. So that was an easy project. Cause you didn't have any conflict, but how do you do that? When people discuss immigration, right? Immigration to Esch. because you would have this, oh, we have too many migrants today or no, I'm part of this Italian migration.

[00:34:59] So how do you deal with more difficult topics and more difficult subjects? And in the last five minutes, I may tell you about the final project that we are still going to do. It is basically using oral history for students to build an app. The idea is to have those signs that you can see on the right. It's a toll free number that people can call to have more information about the site.

[00:35:26] This one is the former airport. The job of the students is to do some research about this airport. So we use the database of, of newspapers, 'cause that's a very rich database. And the job of the students is also to talk to one or two historical witnesses about that site, to be recorded and to be uploaded on the phone.

[00:35:48] So to do so we borrowed that from the city. As you can see, I like the, I like the mobile home kind of structure. This is a, a chalet we've used, it belongs to the city and we've used that and we stayed one Saturday afternoon for people to come and to share their stories about the site that we are working on.

[00:36:09] So we've interviewed some people and the job of the students is first to make sense of the interviews, to check if the facts are right, and to select short clips of two minutes, that could fit the app, so that they, they are also in charge of the production. So not only history, not only historical production, but also the delivery of the project.

[00:36:35] So to conclude there are many bridges between public history and history education, and sometime they overlap very much. So that, for example, last week we had this conference about public history and someone was like, well, actually public history is didactics. Yes and no.

[00:36:51] So there are lot of bridges, but there are also some, some differences, but we share this common interest in history, in the public. What I also find very useful in Public History is the production of history. I don't only want my students to study the past or to study how the history is used in public, but also want 'em to make things.

[00:37:14] And that's the first encounter with public history in the middle school in Quebec. She was making our students doing things in the classroom production, but also with the family members, she was asking her students to interview their grandparents about in that case, it was the history of immigration in Canada.

[00:37:36] So for her, it was common practice. For me as a young history teacher (*i thought*) that's cool. It, it's a way to connect the, the, you know, the textbook, the family history and to engage students who sometimes, you know, have, you know, they don't care about history. They're not interested and they find it it's even boring.

[00:37:55] And I say, well, I'm a young history teacher. I have got to earn but this is something I would like to do later. So to connect the classroom, the family, is something that I find, and most of you know more than that, about that, but something that I find very useful to engage students to appropriate history (*=make history their own*). It is my family history that can connect to a broader history.

[00:38:16] And last but not least I do think that when we teach history, we have to also teach other skills, right. Again, as I said, writing is important, but in my teaching, writing is less important than it was 10 years ago. I think that public skills for me is super important I need to teach more what it is to speak in public. How do you, how do you speak in public? How do you speak on radio? How do you speak on podcast? Something that we underestimate. So in this interdisciplinary skills that I need to work with my colleagues who know much better than me about, theater, acting... that can be super fun for, for history teaching. And last but not least, about the role of historians.

[00:38:57] Why do we need historians today? If people can go online and go to Wikipedia, why do we need historians? it's not a rhetorical question. That's something that we, we spend semesters on. What, why do they do history? It's not only about learning about the past, because you can learn anywhere. So what is it why do we need to train students in doing history?

[00:39:20] Why do we still need to do history? And those questions are international, transversal, and all of our colleagues have them. In Greece, Australia, Indonesia, Colombia, especially in the context of political uses of the past. That's something that connects us all when we teach history. So thank you very much for your attention and I'm looking forward to any comments or questions that you can have.

[00:39:45] **Alice:** Thank you, Thomas, so, so much for the presentation, for this slice of what you've been working on in the past five years. There's so much to take out of this presentation. I'm gonna start with something very personal, which is that some of the participants know it, some do not, but I have had the luck that my mom studied public history.

[00:40:06] She did a master in Italy on public history. And for the first time I will not be asking her this year what is public history? As you said that your mom always asks you. So thank you for that, for giving me these tools. Thank you for making the connection between history and the capacity to communicate history.

[00:40:24] I really, really, really like that point. I love the titles of your project FL'ESCH back and his'tree. I might be sending you a couple of emails for titles of upcoming projects. We will look into that. And yeah I have so many questions that I would personally like to ask. I want first to open the floor to questions from participants.

[00:40:42] While participants think about their questions, I actually do have one question for starters is very small. While you were talking about the projects that you did during COVID and students doing their own recordings, on the slide, it showed a video that was called "random history rant". Is that a title that a student gave to a video?

[00:41:06] That's amazing.

[00:41:07] **Thomas:** Yes. Very much because that's part of the teaching: they have to find their title. And it's super difficult and they, they're usually very academic and very boring. Sorry. So they need a few draft. They need to test with friends. So they ha it's part of the grade they get. A good title doesn't mean a good story, but that's a very good start. So yes, that's something that they came up with.

[00:41:30] **Alice:** That is a great title. I hope they, you know, they go on and they start a series because "random history rant": great title. Okay. Before I start turning this into a conversation between me and Thomas, which is not what I want to do I would like to open the floor to questions or comments.

[00:41:47] **Andreas:** Hello, let me first congratulate you for the presentation.

[00:41:50] It was really inspiring. And since we are at the start of the new school year, I have been thinking about ways to implement things that you have suggested in my classroom. I was just wondering for your, for your last project, the last project you presented you chose the, the phone number approach.

[00:42:11] I was wondering why not a QR code approach or something more up to date or a combination of both. Maybe because the population is old or, and they will, would not use the...

[00:42:21] **Thomas:** Thank you, Andreas. Thank you very much for your comment and for your nice words. Yes, that's something that I...

[00:42:28] Not everything is collaborative, so I didn't ask my students, I imposed the phone for two reasons. One: is it's cheaper. I mean, not everybody has access to internet data, and some of our inhabitants in Esch don't have access to data, so I didn't want an app. Second: it's not always easy for the QR code.

[00:42:48] I know I always use my mother as an example. That's good. She never watches the recording. So I, I can mention her. She doesn't know how to use the QR code. And we have a, a big part of the population that would not use the app. And plus you have a, I dunno, how it is in your country where, where you leave, but we have an abundance of apps.

[00:43:07] We have apps for this and that. Well, sometimes people want to go back to a I wouldn't say nostalgic, but like a voice from the past, right. You click to a number it's free. It's a number free, it's a toll free, and they have a voice from someone who was there or, and you have these direct access that I didn't wanna lose with an app.

[00:43:27] So maybe, maybe on an app you can have images and stuff like that, but I took the risk and I, I think so far, we, we are happy with the, the comments.

[00:43:37] **Andreas:** Thank you so much.

[00:43:38] **Alice:** Maybe building on Andreas' question. I really like what you said about access. And that is also a question that I had. I I've noticed that you have worked with the city in several of your projects. And I was wondering, how did this impact access to, to people? Because when you do public history, you want to yeah bring history out there, but you also need people to help you get, I dunno if this makes any sense, but gather the history that you want then to bring. So how, how was your experience with working with the city and with access and you have any advice for all the history teachers out there on how to go about this?

[00:44:12] **Thomas:** Thank you. That's a good question. Well it's never me and my students only, it's always with partners. And the funny thing is that a good part of my students don't like that. Because they want to have their topic. They wanna have their projects and they don't want to rely on someone else's agenda.

[00:44:27] Because if you work with the city, they may say: well, we need it by then. Or: you cannot do it now. So they usually like this flexibility of I have my research, I can work in the library and then I'm done. If, but I wanna force them to work with people, with partners who have different agenda, who have different views, they have different needs.

[00:44:48] So working with the city is both necessary because if you want to work in the public space, you need, you know, the, the agreement of the city. It's not like, you know, you can go in a public space and post your signs. You need to work with them because they can tell you, well, this is possible or not possible.

[00:45:04] So you need to. It's also a learning experience for, for students who will have to collaborate with people and to, to take into consideration things that are not about history. It's not about, was it true or was not true? No, it's more like you can't use that number because it's a private property. So very different kind of, of discussion.

[00:45:27] Just to give you one example for the art project, the wall. So with my students, we found a wall that belonged, it was a private building. So with 12 landowners, so 12 people in the apartments. So we had to go through the association of the landowners to ask, can we do that on your wall? We had three meetings.

[00:45:51] And the first question that my students and I got first meeting is that "how will that impact the value of my property?" Right? So imagine I'm teaching history. And the first question they ask in this workshop is about the value of the property in Luxembourg, which is a valid question. Right? But it, it struck them, "Oh, doing public history is not only about history. It's about the communications , about accessibility, is about who's gonna maintain the, the fresco, the wall painting once my students are gone", which is again a valid question. So I think accessibility is important, working with the city partners is critical, super important because it shows my students that communicating history is not only about "oh, true or not true".

[00:46:38] It's about: can this be done? What do I, how do I need to sell or present my project to be to be accepted by, by people? So that was a for me too a learning experience.

[00:46:52] **Alice:** Thank you.

[00:46:52] **Lucia:** Hello. Thank you very much for your speech. I have a couple of questions. The first one is about the fact that you spoke about corroboration of interviews with other primary sources, for example, newspapers, you mentioned newspapers. Well, my question is what is the role of historiography in your projects? Do students confront with historiography as well, and how? Especially with regards to middle school students. The second question is about social media. You said that you told how to protect your students when they are online from comments and so on. So my question is, how did you do that? Did you do that by yourself or did you ask for support from other partners?

[00:47:40] Thank you.

[00:47:44] **Thomas:** Thank you, Lucia. Yeah, two again, two very good questions. Maybe the second one about social media first. I did it by myself, but I should have done it with colleagues because it goes way beyond privacy. So we we've studied privacy on, you know, if they choose Twitter or Instagram, we were studying the different privacy modes on Instagram and Twitter. And a couple of tips on guidelines on when to react and how to moderate comments. So can you make it open to everybody or not? So I did by myself cause I thought I could do it. But I would not do that again. I mean, I would need help from not really colleagues here, but maybe the people in the public library or some media colleagues.

[00:48:26] So I did that by myself. It was alright because the topics were not too sensible, but I will, I would not do that again, because I don't think I'm equipped enough to, I would need to learn more about that. So I would work with colleagues to protect them on, on social media more, more than what I did. So that's that's something I would change.

[00:48:45] For historiography, well it depends. I'm not sure about middle school cause it's a long time since I taught in middle school, it's 15 years. So I don't know. What I'm usually doing is when they have project, like for example, a podcast, they always start with the idea of a podcast.

[00:49:01] So the crown for example, so the queen in England. So they need to read the newspaper. They also need to read some online resources articles about, historiographies about the queen so that they can, in a minimum base cause we don't have too much time, but situate what they wanna do in a broader historiography, I'm not talking about the history of England, but I'm talking about maybe one or two articles about the queen in the 20th century representation, something like that.

[00:49:28] I guess, I guess it was different in Louisiana when we did some collaboration with the middle school. They started with, for example, immigration. They started with the curriculum and the textbook about, about immigration and the teachers, and that's where we're at, tried to connect the family history with the textbook.

[00:49:47] So for example people losing a lot of people moving in the early 19th Century. So they connected what the textbook said about immigration figures, very impersonal with family examples of immigration, and they had a class discussion about: okay, the textbooks say that, and your family is here, and what does it say about the history of immigration?

[00:50:09] So I think this could be possible. It's not something I do usually because it takes too much time, but it's always important to have somewhere the historiography about the topic. And that's a challenge. In my class, when I have 10 projects, that means 10 topics, that mean, you know, resources and articles about 10 topics.

[00:50:29] And it's overwhelming for them also for me, because I need to meet each single group and know about this history or that history and to be able to help them so that that's sometimes quite overwhelming. So I spend less time, well, less time teaching in the classroom and more time helping them after hours to find resources and to learn wisdom about the history of, you know biking the Tour de France in the 19th (*century*) someone did that.

[00:50:56] So I had to find a few resources. So it's a lot of time not prepping the, the class, but finding resources for them. So I don't know if that answers your question, but that's that's a very exhausting part.

[00:51:07] **Alice:** We'll we'll definitely get back to the concept of time. And do we have enough time later in our sessions as well? Lucia. Did that answer the questions? Great! Then thank you for the question, and I would like to give the floor to Jenny, I hope I'm pronouncing the name, right?

[00:51:26] **Jenny:** Yes, it is right. Hi everybody. And thanks for the very interesting presentation. I have this question. I think that Public History could be very useful especially in order to teach some topics like, you know, the history of the 19th century. And, and I am going to do this in the next year.

[00:51:48] So I was wondering do you use this practice, do you share this practice with your colleagues or it's something that you do by yourself?

[00:51:59] **Thomas:** Thank you, Jenny.

[00:52:00] Depends where I work. Cause you have some environments that are more open to public history. I have colleagues who don't like Public History. I have colleagues who don't think it's history. They think it's, you know, communication. It's not, it's not history. The real history is, you know, when you have 20 footnotes in an article or something like that.

[00:52:21] So depends where you are. I'm lucky to be in an environment where Public History is embraced. So I, I work with colleagues who have different expertise so they can help me. I can help them. But very often I work with colleagues who are not historians, cause those are the people I need the most. So for example I mentioned that colleague who was doing theater and learning how to speak in public.

[00:52:46] I mean, I learned much more from him than from my other colleagues, cause he was able to teach me and the classroom about how to breathe, where to breathe when you speak. I never thought about, you know, breathing, speaking. Well, that's fine. But when you do a podcast, when you're too fast, you need some breathing exercise and breathing practice.

[00:53:05] So I love learning with my students. And I think that those people can enrich how I teach history. So breathing and theater, but also the media specialist who (*taught us*) how do you use all the cameras, where do you put the, the interviewee in the camera? All those things are not coming from my colleagues. They're coming from other people who communicate or work with community or activists.

[00:53:30] Because if you wanna work with communities locally, you need to build trust. You cannot simply like, come with your students and say, Hey, I'd like to do, I'd like to do a project under history of that monument, for example. Right. So building trust is something that I've been working with my colleague, but also with activists, people who are very active in the community that I try to bring to the classroom, so that since they talked to them (=the members of the community), they, they, they know each other.

[00:53:57] And then we go to them. So I think this is not talking about colleagues, but I think I need to expand the people I work with. So colleagues, yes. Outside the university as well and, and activists and people who are involved in the community. So that's something I, I find very enriching for my students too.

[00:54:19] Instead of, you know, inviting another historian in my classroom, I invite an activist is very, you know, wants to, for example, destroy a monument because it's a colonial monument. So we try to understand why that person is willing to destroy the monument and why someone else is willing to keep the monument. So we bring them to the classroom and that's very enriching cause the students they're very much engaging to the discussion with those people.

[00:54:45] So again, I, I don't know if I answered your question, but I, I think we need to work with more different people because students will be working or talking to them anyway, afterwards.

[00:54:56] **Alice:** Thank you, Jenny, for the question and thank you, Thomas, for the answer. I had a very similar question, which was about bringing in external experts. And I think you answered most of it, but I'm interested to know more about how does it work when you bring in an external expert that is not an historian.

[00:55:12] We work a lot with photographers and video producers and well, we will actually have a workshop about theater in the classroom. So I'm very happy that you mentioned theater quite a lot, or with guides for guided tours, for example. And I find it that sometimes they bring a very interesting perspective, but sometimes of course, because it's not their priority, history with them goes a little bit more in the background.

[00:55:36] So how, how did you or your students experience this, if you experienced this?

[00:55:44] **Thomas:** Yeah, that's true, that they usually don't bring history, but that's the, for me, that's the point. If I want history, I do it myself or I ask in store. So I'm perfectly fine with them. I invited a, a tour guide when the, the final exam was a guided tour.

[00:56:00] So instead of a paper, I wanted my students to do a guided tour. So groups of two doing a guided tour of the city. So they had to learn how to do it. So I didn't invite an historian, I invited a professional tour guide. And he spoke for one hour about tips or his experience, or how do you keep your items engaged? When do you ask the questions? How fast you are, where do you go? How do you, how fast you walk, how do you plan your, your tour? these kind of things that have nothing to do with history, but if you don't know them if you don't know the tips, if you, if you don't know how to plan your tour beforehand, you're gonna, you're gonna fail your assignment.

[00:56:36] So I think our job is to make sure that after the guest, so the session after them you discuss about *how can you translate that tips into communicating history?* I think this is our job, not the guest to, to do it. So you can have an open discussion with students. Sometimes they don't like the guest and say, well, what's the point of that?

[00:56:57] Well, then we discuss, what's the point of pacing your talk, right?. So I think this is the second phase of the guest.

[00:57:05] And one thing with COVID was that the, the capacity to have online guests, I had, I never had so many guests during the, the COVID cause it was online anyway, and some of our colleagues were not teaching or couldn't travel.

[00:57:19] So had people from different part of the world talking about monuments. So we had many sessions about monuments, what to do with monuments, what's the colonial monuments. And we had people from, from England. Obviously I was, I was teaching in English, so that, that helped, but we had people from England and from Australia, talking about different case and for students to see someone from Australia, wow, that that's cool. And oh, we have actually the same discussion about, you know, colonial monuments. That's interesting. So the, the, the COVID I shouldn't say that, but, but help having more diverse guest. That you don't have to bring to the classroom.

[00:57:56] It's not always the same. For example, a guide, a tour guide I think it works better when you bring him or her on site, but for other type of discussion, I think that this can work online pretty well.

[00:58:08] And also something I love is making my students talk to other students. I did that in Louisiana asking my students to talk with students from Dublin in Ireland and they disagreed, they

disagreed about, oh, can you work for a client? Can you do history for a client? And the Irish were saying: "no, because it's neoliberal, it's it's you know, it, history is not for sale". And my students were cliche about America, but "why not? It's consulting. I mean, you, you, you do history and your produce history". So it was very rich to make students talk to each other.

[00:58:41] So that's something that I, I will likely do do again.

[00:58:46] **Alice:** Thank you. Then I will thank Thomas again. So, so much for hosting this keynote lecture. Thank you for bringing so much food for thought. It was a great way to start our webinar series.

[00:58:57] I would like to invite everyone who hasn't done that yet to check out our *miniseries on oral history* that we have published on our YouTube channel. Bridget walks us through how to prepare your students to host interviews.

[00:59:11] What they really love about what we have been talked about so far in terms of public history, is that this is something that you can do in every language. I really I'm really happy that, you know, to talk about public history. It means talk about tools that then you can use with your students, irrespective of the language that you speak.

[00:59:27] So yeah, I hope as Andreas said, you will use what we've learned today and what we will talk about in the next couple of weeks to set up new projects for the year. This is one of the reasons why we do this webinar series in August and September in the first place. And Thomas thank you again, so, so much thank you for all the participants to joining us, and I hope to see you soon!

[00:59:52] **Thomas:** Thank you very much for the invitation. It was great talking with you!