

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> Oxford Brookes University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 36 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
<b>Title of case study:</b> Memories of Cinema Going in 1950s Italy
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research insights from Oxford Brookes University's Dr Daniela Treveri-Gennari on the practice of cinema-going in 1950s Italy has raised public awareness of the importance of autobiographical memories in the elderly as well as actively involved the elderly in reconstructing the history of an important time in Italian film industry. These benefits of the project were achieved through innovative British Academy funded research-led collaborations between Dr Daniela Treveri-Gennari (Oxford Brookes University) and colleagues at Exeter and Bristol Universities, working with Memoro (a non-profit initiative dedicated since 2007 to divulgate memories of people born before 1940), Rome City Council and the University of the Third Age. Dr Treveri-Gennari has joined with non-profit organisations to create a full map of post-war Italian cinema which includes: oral history of cinema-going; programming dataset; the first topographical charting of cinemas; and the first extensive reviews of popular press of the time.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Memories of Cinema Going in 1950s Italy started with a case study conducted in Rome with 20 elderly participants, who had been interviewed on their memories of cinema-going. The result of that research was presented as 'In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences in the 1940s and 1950s: Gender, genre and national identity' at the Edinburgh International Film Audiences Conference in June 2011, and then published in Participations, Journal of Audiences and Reception Studies, Volume 8, Issue 2 (November 2011).</p> <p>The results of the first part of the project (on Rome) has been presented to the general public in an event in Rome in collaboration with Rome City Council, as well as presented to the NECS Conference in Prague (19-22 June 2013) and to the IAMHIST Conference: Childhood and the Media: University of Leicester (17-20 July 2013). The article (2013) Lost Audiences: Memories of cinema-going in 1950s Rome was submitted to publication to Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television (available on request) and the article written with Professor John Sedgwick (Utrecht University) 'Film popularity, programming patterns and audience choices in 1950s Rome' will be submitted at the end of September to Film History (available on request).</p> <p>The project has now been expanded to the whole Italian territory in a collaborative research which involves the University of Bristol and Exeter. This project was funded by the AHRC (£654,000) (Ref. AH/K003453/1).</p> <p>In the first part of the project (on Rome) Trevari-Gennari investigated how the memory of events related to cinema-going were woven into people's personal narrative, as well as whether the geographical location was significant in the data if compared to the rest of the country. The social connotation of cinema – vividly described by the participant - is not only evident in terms of relationships (love, friendship, family and marriages) and identity formation but also in the role of the vivid personal events as one of the temporal landmarks in autobiographical memory: 'first experiences' (Shum 1998: 423). The memory of cinema going is therefore associated to what Stubbings (2003: 69) defines 'key aspects of the lifecycle': the first time of smoking a cigarette, the first time of seeing Sophia Loren on the big screen, but more the first kiss as well as the first time the participant fell in love with a future husband or wife.</p> <p>The initial outcomes of the research demonstrate – differing from official histories of Italian cinemas - that the location memories were much stronger than narratives, dates of first screenings or actors seen in films. Cinemas' geographical locations were noticed in the responses of the participants, underpinning Annette Kuhn's argument that 'place is extraordinarily insistent in memories' (2010: 275). Names and exact addresses of the cinemas attended were often remembered more easily than the films or the stars seen. Trevari-Gennari also created a geographical map of cinema-going in Rome (available on the web at: <a href="http://www.memoro.org/it/brookes/">http://www.memoro.org/it/brookes/</a>) to analyse against the programming dataset and to assess against the memories of local audiences, in order to</p>

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investigate 'the ways in which different places have different meanings for different sections of the populations' (Jancovich and Faire 2003: 24). Topographical memory and local belonging are important to reflect upon the vital relationship between the cultural geography of the city and cinema-going.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Treveri-Gennari, D., O'Rawe, C. & Hipkins, D. (2011) 'In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences in the 1940s and 1950s: Gender, genre and national identity', paper presented at the Edinburgh International Film Audiences Conference in June 2011 and then published in *Participations, Journal Of Audiences and Reception Studies*, Volume 8, Issue 2 (November 2011) (available at: <http://www.participations.org/Volume%208/Issue%202/31%20Treveri%20et%20al.pdf>).
2. Treveri Gennari, D. (2013) *Lost Audiences: Memories of cinema-going in 1950s Rome*. Paper to be presented to the NECS Conference in Prague in June 2013 and submitted to publication to *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (available on request).
3. Treveri Gennari, D., Sedgwick, J. (2013). *Film popularity, programming patterns and audience choices in 1950s Rome*. Article to be submitted to *Film History* (available on request).
4. The project was awarded a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (MD 120012) in April 2012 (£84,000) to cover Treveri-Gennari's sabbatical from September 2012 to September 2013, and in April 2013 a Arts and Humanities Research Council Standard Research Grant (September 2013-September 2016) (Ref: AH/K003453/1) (£654,000).
5. Treveri Gennari, D. (2013) *Cinema through the senses: memories of child audiences in 1950s Rome*. Paper to be presented at the IAMHIST (International Association of Media and History) Congress (University of Leicester) on the theme of 'Childhood and the Media' (available on request).
6. *Ricordi degli spettatori cinematografici romani degli anni Cinquanta*. Event organised in collaboration with Rome City Council on 6th May 2013.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of the research came through the event organised at the Università della Terza Età' [the University of the Third Age] (UNITRE) Annual Conference in November 2011, where the research project received very favourable and enthusiastic response from over 200 participants of the Conference, who all expressed great interest in taking part in the initiative. Unitre have offered to collaborate by distributing the questionnaire to their 268 regional branches in Italy.

In the summer of 2012 – following the successful British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship, 325 questionnaires were distributed in Rome. The City Council supported the project by inviting the project team to discuss it and present it to over 300 elderly gathered for an event organized by the Deputy Mayor and by offering a main meeting room for an event organized with the City to present the findings of the Rome project in May 2013, as well as transporting the elderly involved in the project to the event. Moreover, the Deputy Mayor of Rome has sustained the data gathering in all the over 140 centres for old people present in Rome [see letter with note of the Deputy Mayor]. Participants defined the project as 'a real opportunity' for actively engaging the elderly, while others commented on the 'enriching experience of sharing memories with others who had lived through the same years' (Angelo Del Treste, 6/5/2013).

The Memoro website has a special section dedicated to the Lost Audiences Project, where the pilot interviews have been uploaded in 2010. So far, the videos have been seen over 6380 times, demonstrating a real interest for the subject. However, the highest level of impact was demonstrated through the event organised in Rome on 6th of May 2013. The event was supported by the City Council, which provided their main event room as well as free transport to get the elderly involved in the project to the venue. The event gave Dr Treveri-Gennari the opportunity to present the results of the project to not only the participants but also to elderly from several Old People Centres in Rome, City Council representatives, University students from Film Studies and Architecture Degrees of the Università di Roma La Sapienza (first University in Rome), as well as film industry representatives. A feedback form was given to all participants and the answers provided clearly demonstrate not only an impact on the processes of commemoration but mainly a significant role the project played on the relationship between the elderly of the city and their

cultural life: several participants commented on the importance of 'being allowed to remember the best times of their lives'; 'the importance of sharing their memories with a wider audience'; 'how this project has given value to the memories of the elderly'; 'how this project has given them the opportunity not to be reflecting only negatively about the past, but being actively part of a communal process which highly regards memories and the elderly' (Angelo Zarfani, 6/5/2013; Teresa Gervasi Rabitti, 6/5/2013; Giuseppina Muzzatti, 6/5/2013).

The Rome project also has a facebook group page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/238705016228814/?fref=ts>) with 148 members. Members have contributed to the page by discussing and sharing their memories, uploading photos and suggesting possible collaborative initiatives (for instance working on a project on mapping closed cinema venues).

Elderly people presented at the event expressed interest in the outcomes of the research, with which they agreed, but also commented on the importance of such a project not only to reflect on the value of people's memories, but mainly on the way this process has allowed them to reflect with others on the meaning of cinema in their lives. Several members of the audience who had not taken part in the research were keen to find out about the website and the publication of the outcomes because they were interested in the results of the project. Two actresses, as well as two projectionists who had worked in the film industry in the 1950s took part in the event and asked to be involved in the project (Nandy Primavera, Lucia Modugno, Ciro Giorgini, Roberto Parisi). The representatives of the City Council have asked to expand this project, in order to involve a bigger number of elderly people and this interest from the Council has already demonstrated the importance of the project on different aspects of the social life: one representative asked to work on an initiative which can bridge the young and the older generation, working with elderly people who can tell their memories to children in schools; another asked to work on the processes of commemoration of the city, by developing a project on lost cinema theatres in Rome, so important for the elderly people and their cultural past. The national press was involved: an article was published in the main Rome newspaper *Il Messaggero*, which sells around 230,000 copies every day and has a mainly elderly readership. Moreover, three articles were published on the Press Agency AGI (Agenzia Giornalistica Italia), one of the Italian leading press agencies.

Following Treveri-Gennari's involvement in the project, she was asked to work on a similar initiative for the Centenary of the Phoenix Cinema in Oxford. The CityScreen programmer for the cinema has invited her to analyse memories of Phoenix cinema-goers and the results of this research will be available in the volume *The Phoenix Picturehouse. 100 Years of Cinema Memories* (forthcoming in November 2013).

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Evidence of elderly participation in the Rome project available on: <http://www.memoro.org/it/brookes/>
2. Google analytics on the Memoro website Rome project (Project Website on Memoro server (available at <http://www.memoro.org/it/brookes/>) where the videos have been seen over 6380 times.
3. 325 Questionnaires on Rome (confidential)
4. Programme of UNITRE Conference where we were invited to present the project
5. Corroborative statement author 1. Letter from UNITRE to confirm their interest in being involved in the project.
6. Corroborative statement author 2. Letter with note from Deputy Mayor to support the project with Old People Centres in Rome
7. Corroborative statement author 3. Letter from MEMORO to express their interest in being involved in the project
8. The article Treveri-Gennari, Daniela, Catherine O'Rawe & Danielle Hipkins. 'In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences in the 1940s and 1950s: Gender, genre and national identity', *Participations, Journal Of Audiences and Reception Studies*, Volume 8, Issue 2 (November 2011). This is available on <http://www.participations.org/Volume%208/Issue%202/31%20Treveri%20et%20al.pdf>.

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9. Corroborative statement author 4. Letter from cinema programmer City Screen inviting Dr Treveri-Gennari to work on a similar project for the Centenary of the Phoenix Cinema.
10. Articles from national and local press to express their interest in the event organised in Rome on 6th May 2013
11. Corroborative statement author 5. Letter from Rome City Council to support the project and to seek collaboration for a similar event that can involve more elderly