

Social History/Media History.
Sources, Methodologies, Research for the History of Cinema and Television in Italy

Sapienza University of Rome
Department of History Anthropology Religions Arts Performing Arts
May 11-12, 2023

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Call for papers

The study of cinema and television audiences in Italy is not a recent area of research: as early as the 1950s, the first ethnographic surveys of small communities of film and television viewers became widespread (see for example the researches by Pinna, Maclean, Guidacci and De Rita). It is, however, a soon-to-be exhausted issue, taken up more recently by historiographical studies thanks to the tradition of New Cinema History (see especially the works of Biltereyst, Maltby and Meers), which has definitively sanctioned the legitimacy of spectators, places of consumption and media reception practices as objects of study and historical research in the Italian context as well.

The messy and extremely rich overabundance of sources scattered among viewers' memories has left countless traces in their diaries, letters, notes, artifacts. Despite the shifts introduced by cultural studies, and the return of empirical research in the 1980s, this enormous quantity of sources was neglected for decades. Only thanks to the radical transformation of the media landscape in the last two decades has been a return to the study of audiences from a historical perspective. Taken into consideration the metamorphosis of cinema and the relocation of its viewing practices, as well as the rise of television and the multiplication of screens, the element that has changed the least is, arguably, the spectators: men and women, in front of a large or small screen, united by the same consumption experiences, negotiating a social and cultural meaning based on a range of factors (social, political, geographical, cultural).

Thus, spectators, differentiated viewing practices, and memories of film and television consumption have taken on a new centrality within the most recent studies on cinema and media in Italy (see, among others, the pioneering works of Casetti, Fanchi, and Mosconi) and numerous new research projects funded at the national and European levels (e.g., the British project [Italian Cinema Audiences](#), the educational and research project sponsored by Sapienza [Romarcord. Research on the Social History of Cinema in Rome](#), and more recently the PRIN 2020 [CinEx. Spazi pratiche e politiche dell'esercizio cinematografico in Italia](#)).

This call invites, therefore, to reflect on the multiple lines of research that have developed over the years around the social and cultural history of cinema and audiovisual media in Italy. At the same time, we would like to think about possible re-readings, new interpretations, re-evaluations and perspectives on official historiography through the use of non-traditional sources.

In general terms, the conference aims to: a) rethink the role of social history within the official historiography on cinema and audiovisual media; b) promote an interdisciplinary reflection on the relationship between cinema, memories, audiences and spaces of vision (oral history, urban history, intimate histories, etc.); c) reflect on the use of oral, archival, private sources (letters, diaries, ephemera, etc.) through a renewal of perspectives on cinema and audiovisual studies.

Papers should be organized around Italian case studies from a historical perspective. Proposals that will reason around the following perspectives (while not necessarily limited to them) will be particularly encouraged:

- The relationship between social history and media history from a methodological perspective;
- The interrelationships between social, cultural and institutional history in the study of film and media;
- The historical reconstruction of places, habits and spaces of consumption;
- The relationships between audience, consumption and exhibition from a social/cultural perspective;
- The use of oral and private sources (diaries, letters, etc.) in film and media history;
- Ethnographic research as an integration to institutional sources;
- The use of interviews as a historiographical practice in reconstructions of specific sectors of the audiovisual industry (production, distribution, exhibition, screenwriting, etc.);
- Archival finds from both private and institutional funds that shed new light on the historiography of cinema and media in Italy from a social perspective;
- Social practices and the use of ethnography in film and television production.

Paper proposals (300 words max), together with a short bio (200 words max) and a rough indication of the type of sources that will be used, should be sent, in Italian or English, to romarcord@gmail.com by **January 31, 2023**. A response to the proponents will be sent by February 10, 2023.

The conference is organized in conclusion of the academic project *Romarcord. Research in the Social History of Cinema in Rome*, the main results of which in terms of research and dissemination will be presented.

Organizing Committee:

Samuel Antichi, Anja Boato, Francesca Cantore, Federica D'Urso, Arianna Vietina