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Topic of the Year: Small but Kind of Mighty

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Postscript

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The first volume of Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology came out at a critical juncture. It would be fair to say that the journal is characterised by its close association with Italian archaeology. Given the presence of numerous monumental archaeological sites and the extensive history of archaeological study in Italy, one could argue that Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology is promised to flourish, offering a long-awaited forum for discussion on public archaeology, fine-tuned for audiences having a direct or indirect interest in Italian archaeology.

Public archaeology as a research area and a form of practice has been developing over the last few decades. It originated from discussions by archaeologists based in Anglophone countries, in particular the United States, Britain and Australia. Since around the turn of the century, however, public archaeology has expanded outside the Anglophone countries too. The growth of public archaeology in Italy in recent years should be understood in this broader global context.

The spread of public archaeology across the globe has coincided with the march of globalization. New information, ideas, technology and business have been moving across the borders of countries increasingly easily and fast, and this has certainly driven public archaeology to 'go international.' Public archaeology, however, evolves in a unique way in each place, reflecting a great variety of local traditions of engaging with the past and of legal instruments regulating archaeological activities in different countries. It is therefore worth examining how public archaeology develops in each new place; Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology is expected to investigate this in the Italian context.

It will be particularly interesting to probe the extent to which Italian public archaeology can be critical. Globalisation has so far been expanding in tandem with neoliberal economic ideology, which is characterised by the logic of the free market. Demanding more 'value for money' in most sectors of society, neoliberalism has encouraged archaeologists to cater to the demand of their stakeholders, inter alia sponsors, in contemporary society. In this climate it becomes harder for archaeologists to challenge the political influence exerted on archaeology by its sponsors. Will Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology be able to raise critical questions of public archaeology, such as: Whose interest does Italian archaeology serve? Are minority groups well represented in the past reconstructed by Italian archaeology?

The situation has in fact become even more complicated lately with the results of the Brexit referendum and the US Presidential election in 2016, which together with recent political moves in Europe and

Asia - including the outcome of the Italian constitutional referendum in December 2016 - suggest a gradual formation of anti-Establishment populism caused by the uneven effects of globalization and neoliberalism worldwide. At present, no one can predict how this populism will impact on archaeology. It may help archaeology serve the interests of more people, although it is unclear whether more interactions with the public automatically means better interactions with the public. Arguably, the underlying question is whether public archaeology is different from populist archaeology.

Surely there is no easy answer to any of such big questions. Yet Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology, born at a critical juncture, is bound to consider them.

