

Marie Andreassen

Marie Andreassen is a Master of Arts in Italian. She has written her PhD dissertation at the Graduate School History, Archaeology and Classical Studies of the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, where she has been part of the memory studies research unit.

Time and place for the defence

2 May 2016 at 13.15
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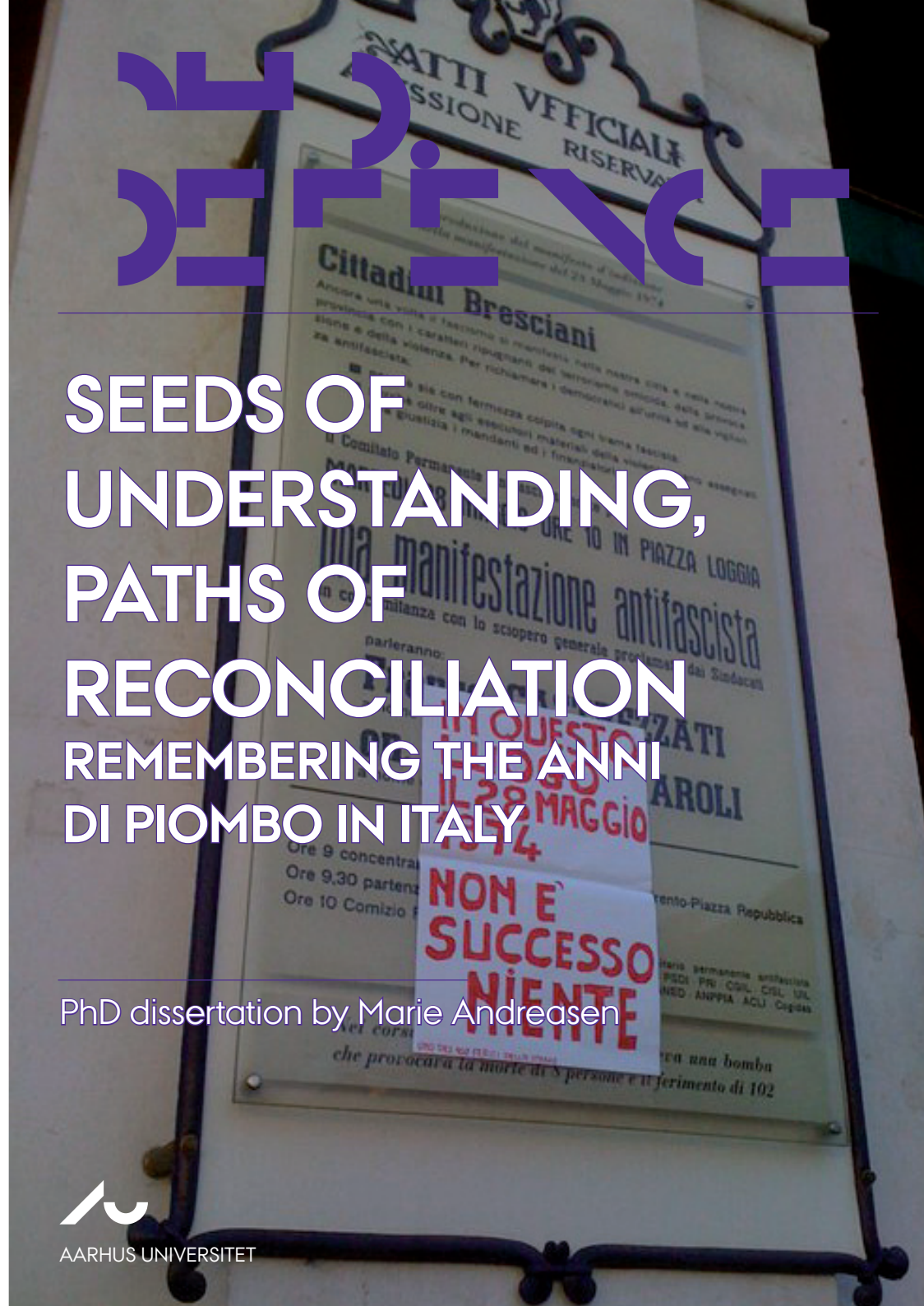
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SEEDS OF UNDERSTANDING, PATHS OF RECONCILIATION REMEMBERING THE ANNI DI PIOMBO IN ITALY

PhD dissertation by Marie Andreassen



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SEEDS OF UNDER- STANDING, PATHS OF RECONCILIATION

REMEMBERING THE ANNI DI PIOMBO IN ITALY

Summary of the main points of the PhD dissertation *Seeds of Understanding, Paths of Reconciliation. Remembering the Anni di piombo in Italy* by Marie Andreasen, School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. The dissertation explores the memory of and reconciliation process following the wave of politically motivated violence that afflicted Italy from 1969 until the middle of the 1980s, the so-called anni di piombo.

The anni di piombo and their legacy

- The anni di piombo make for a scientifically interesting case in the field of transitional justice, as the period still constitutes an open wound in Italian society at a distance of more than 30 years.
- Public discourse in Italy comprises no shared understanding of these years, which results in avoidance, oblivion and political use of history.
- The reward legislation adopted by the Italian state to end terrorism, the 'strategy of amnesia' carried out by the state and a perceived larger visibility given to the perpetrators in the 1980s and 1990s brought about severe repercussions for the citizens' sense of justice, violating their right to truth and justice.
- As a result, the victims have undergone a process of re-victimisation and most victims do not recognise themselves in, and in some cases they strongly oppose, the kind of recon-

ciliation process forwarded by the state and a part of society, which is perceived as a pressure towards forgiving the perpetrators, forgetting and 'moving on'.

- A process of reconciliation, albeit controversial and not without various difficulties, seems worth pursuing, since a lack of truth risks perpetuating the already existing 'divisività' of Italian society.

The dissertation explores:

- the viewpoints that emerge in the self-narratives of the perpetrators and victims, how these influence the process of reconciliation and whether the perpetrators and victims contribute - through their memories or their public role - to changes in society.
- whether a past of political violence should be left to rest or whether reconciliation should still be pursued despite the enduring disagreement in public discourse. If so, how and in what form?

Conclusion

- There is an evident clash between the different expectations toward "reconciliation" of the various actors. The 'turn to the victim' in political discourse clearly means different things for the various actors.
- 'Reconciliation' should be negotiated to fit the expectations of all actors involved - the relationship which is negotiated should be that of the entire community who should be ready and willing to engage in reconciliation, and not only the relationship of its political leaders. That is why it is important that also the victims are included in the reconciliation process.
- The victims are split within the victim group on how to approach the past. This has negative consequences for their impact on public debate on the memory of the anni di piombo and on their impact as a united group with claims toward the state and the public. Also it hinders the work of the 'agents for truth'. This divide contributes to the difficulty of creating a shared memory.
- As the narratives present in Italian society today seem to form "a plurality of voices without dialogue", an agonistic, open-endedly dialogic mode of remembering the past in which the perspectives of victims, perpetrators as well as other involved parts are included could be a possible solution in Italy. The work of some victims, the 'agents for truth and justice', who use their memory in the search to obtain truth and justice, is a project of democracy and cultural growth that fills the vacuum created by the absence of the state.