

## ***Project : 'A tale of two twinned cities: Corato and Grenoble '***

**Webinar organized by the association Atelier Généalogique on  
September 24, 2021:**

“Where do we go from here ?”

"How can descendants of emigrants contribute to the documentation of emigration history, by collaborating in migration studies ?"

*(Numbers below correspond to the timing of the webinar recording)*

Communication by **Catherine Virlouvet**, Professeur émérite, Aix Marseille Université, former director (2011-2019) of the Ecole Française de Rome

### **00.13.40 *The need to digitize***

Good evening everyone, thank you for the invitation, but I am by no means a specialist in migration as you know. I am, as James said, a professor of ancient history so very far from contemporary migrations.

But Italian migrations from the 19th century onwards affect me because Italy is, I must say, a sort of second homeland for me. I have lived in Rome for twenty years, as if I had migrated from France to Italy. I still live there, so I am not indifferent to this topic, and I want to testify, also as a historian, that I fully support the effort to safeguard and digitize the Corato archives and archives in general, because digitizing seems necessary and feasible.

On this point, there is no need to fear things done against the law, for example, where privacy is concerned. Digitizing does not automatically mean opening access to an archive to everyone; there are rules, in Italy as in France. As long as the time set by the legislator to consult the archives has not yet passed, they cannot be opened to everyone. They can be opened on motivated requests to researchers, to families who are looking for their own origins. So, it is not to be feared that this is not feasible because of privacy.

On the other hand, digitizing, of course has a cost, but it does not seem insurmountable. That is, when there is the will, money can always be found, especially because it does not cost so much: you can ask for the help of university institutions, research laboratories, regional bodies, and also count on the collaboration of volunteers who know how to do it. So it doesn't seem like a very expensive thing to me.

Finally, I come to the third point. The most important one, for the historian and also for society and for the future, is the fact that to digitize is to save. Paper documents are fragile, often stored in hot or humid conditions, etc., which lead to their degradation. Having digitized copies of archives is a way of doubling our chances of

transmitting the memory of the past to future generations and this, as a historian, seems very important to me.

That said, I leave the floor to those who are more knowledgeable on the subject than I am, and please excuse me for not being able to stay with you until the end. I can stay a little longer, I had made other commitments for tonight, I'm sorry, and please excuse me truly. I will now pass the floor to Professor Sanfilippo. Is that right, James?

00.08.35 Catherine Virlouvet .

Please, it was a pleasure and also a duty since what I said about my interest in the preservation of archives. Thank you very much. Good evening to you. Goodbye.