

## Republican Italy and international aid, 1945-1989

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The project:

The project aims to explore the links between international humanitarianism and Republican Italy in the period between 1945 and 1989. Such periodization will allow us to focus on Italy's complex transformation from a recipient country (a major beneficiary of international aid in the long post-war period) to a key actor in the formulation of policies, practices and cultures of international humanitarianism. The research will shed light on continuities and turning points marking this period in history through a series of case studies: the operations of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in Italy; the 1950s Italian children adoption program; international aid projects in the 1960s and Italian funding of intergovernmental agencies; the NGO boom in the 1980s; and humanitarian intervention in Ethiopia. The individual case studies will be developed through multiple intersecting levels of analysis: the role played by aid (received or distributed) in the re-positioning of Italy within the international scenario; non-state actors' activism and their relationship with institutions; the multiple cultures of international solidarity and their influence on humanitarian mobilization.

The project seeks to contribute to the international historiography of humanitarianism, which has experienced extraordinary growth in recent years. Research on individual national experiences has mostly focused on those countries such as Great Britain, France and the United States that have invested more resources in international aid and wielded greater influence over relief programs, as well as being home to the most important non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Research as a whole has produced a coherent reconstruction of the humanitarian regime that took hold in the second half of the twentieth century, and yet it has overlooked the experience of those countries commonly regarded as "secondary actors", such as Italy. Through the analysis of the Italian case, the project aims to review and expand on interpretations and periodization emerging from the historiographical debate and further articulate the framework outlined by humanitarian studies. At the same time, the project seeks to add momentum to a line of research in which important contributions have been made (on NGOs, the Italian relationship with the UN, the cultures of solidarity), but which is not yet a prominent field in the history of Republican Italy.

The research will draw on a set of primary sources from archives of international organizations (e.g. United Nations Archives, New York), Italian central governing bodies (e.g. Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome; Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Rome), private agencies (e.g. Centro di documentazione di Mani Tese, Milan), and local institutions (e.g. municipal archives in Rome, Milan, Naples). These sources will allow us to employ multiple scales of analysis and highlight interconnections between the local, national, and transnational dimensions of humanitarianism. This will give us the opportunity to trace a history of humanitarianism that does not limit itself to examining the donors' programs but also focuses on how the recipient countries received and recast them. From a methodological point of view, the Italian case will be investigated using the analytical tools made available by transnational history. This approach has proved particularly effective in demonstrating that not only does relief establish a link between donor and

recipient countries, but it also contributes to shaping the same complex interdependencies that have shaped global history in the second half of the twentieth century.

Other Participants:

Università di Milano (coordinator)

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