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Humanitarianism and Southern Europe: New Perspectives in (Re)Thinking the Transitions to Democracy

Call for Papers

International Workshop

University of Florence, Department of Social and Political Sciences

October 15th and 16th, 2024

This biennium (2024-25) marks the 50th anniversary of the end of authoritarian regimes in Greece, Portugal, and Spain. Their democratization processes have captured the attention of international and political historians, social scientists, and cultural researchers ever since. At the center of the inquiry have been questions related to the various and multifaceted changes ‘democratization’ brought to the public and private sphere, the legacies of anti-dictatorial struggles in forging new ideas of modernization, transitional justice and the evolving memorialization of the period. More recently, research on Southern Europe’s transitions argued for the need to adopt more transnational and comparative perspectives, to include new actors and understudied dimensions, and to expand the chronologies and geographies under study (also including the former Portuguese and Spanish colonies, and Cyprus).

This workshop aims at shedding new light on the history of these transitions. It adopts the lens of the humanitarian initiatives that Greek, Portuguese and Spanish actors undertook before and after the 1974-1975 turning point. The purpose is to explore the role that humanitarian concerns and repertoires played in bringing and consolidating democratic governance in these countries. At the same time, we want to understand how authoritarian, anti-authoritarian and democratic experiences transformed humanitarianism in Greece, Portugal and Spain upon the advent of democracy and during its consolidation.

In addressing these questions, we will be contributing to bring together the disconnected historiographies of humanitarianism, human rights, development and political change.

We welcome papers dealing with individual case studies, as well as comparative and transnational approaches. We are also interested in papers dealing with the articulation of the local, regional, national and global dimensions of humanitarian initiatives during the transitions to democracy. *Longue-durée* perspectives on the transitions are also welcome.

Papers can be related, but not limited, to the following topics:

- Greek, Portuguese and/or Spanish clandestine and institutionalized humanitarian initiatives under authoritarian and/or democratic rule: networks, actions and processes;
- The interconnections between democratization, decolonization, and the forging of new relationships with the “Global South” and Eastern Europe, through humanitarian initiatives (solidarity networks, emergency aid, development projects);
- Humanitarianism at the end of the Portuguese and Spanish empires;
- The humanitarian activism of exiles, diaspora and returnees;
- History of Portuguese, Spanish and/or Greek NGOs in the context of the transition to democracy (processes of international integration and “Westernization”);
- Evolving approaches to humanitarian understandings from dictatorships to democracy;
- Recipient perspectives on Greek, Portuguese and/or Spanish humanitarian initiatives before and after the transitions;
- The involvement of new humanitarian actors during the political transitions. For example, the humanitarian initiatives of political parties, grassroots movements, rural groups, neighbourhoods, religious actors, etc.;
- Humanitarian commitments and their interplay with new political and social agendas: from health rights (AIDS and reproductive rights) to new migratory crises (exiles, returnees and refugees), among other topics;

- Humanitarianism in Greece, Portugal and/or Spain within the processes of (re)integration to the UN, EEC, and other international institutions;
- The entanglements between humanitarianism and human rights at international campaigns before and during transitions, i.e. campaigns for political prisoners, against human rights violations, combating hunger, natural disasters etc.;
- The ways in which humanitarian issues connected or created conflicts between different socio-political movements

The workshop will take place on October 15-16, 2024, at the University of Florence, Italy. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered.

A selection of papers will be considered for future publication.

Please send an abstract of 300 words and a short-bio (200 words) to humaneuromederc@gmail.com

Deadline for submissions: May 15, 2024.

Notification of acceptance: by June 30, 2024.

Organizing Committee:

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www.humaneuromed.unifi.it