



UNIMORE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA



ANTI-FASCISM(S) FROM 1989 TO THE PRESENT. ACTORS, MEANINGS, PRACTICES AND CIRCULATION

Call for papers

Anti-fascism emerged in Italy in the early 1920s to counter the tide of Fascism, but it soon became a global phenomenon, following the various autonomous trajectories of political émigrés and the international circulation of ideas. The original Italian political cultures that had eventually formed a united anti-fascist front by overcoming divisions and divergences thus travelled around the world and adapted themselves to different spaces and times (Garcia 2016; Brasken, Copsey, Featherstone 2020; Camurri 2024).

After World War II, anti-fascism was one of the pillars on which the European political and symbolic order was based, both to the east of the Iron Curtain – where it became a kind of state religion – and in the West (De Bernardi, Ferrari 2004). Here, it influenced the birth of mass democracy depending on the presence and strength of local resistance movements, without excluding countries that had a different timing such as Spain and Portugal (De Felice 1997; Gallerano 1993, 1999).

In the following decades, anti-fascisms had a complex life and were never just an object of memory, although the politics of memory and collective memories played an important role. Anti-fascisms came across new issues, cultures, vocabularies, repertoires of action and social actors who opened up new horizons of meaning by appropriating this tradition. Think, for example, of the Black Panther Party and the various themes it brought together and re-worked: anti-fascism, anti-racism, abolitionism, socialism, feminism, generational issues, the tension between historical decolonisation and postcolonial openings (Mullen, Vials 2020).

The fall of ‘real socialism’ between 1989 and 1991 strongly contributed to the erosion of anti-fascism on an international scale. In the European Community, anti-communism, anti-totalitarianism and the memory of the Shoah have progressively obscured anti-fascism as a symbolic foundational moment. Italy – the original cradle of anti-fascism – is probably the country where the crisis was felt the most (Luzzatto 2004). The end of the parties that had written the Italian Constitution and the birth of post-constitutional parties such as the Northern League, National Alliance, Forza Italia, Five Star Movement (M5S) weakened the link between anti-fascism and the Republican political field. In particular, the dissolution of the Partito comunista italiano has had a huge impact on the disintegration of anti-fascism in local and national institutions and in a part of Italian society that identified with it. In fact, the largest communist party in the Western world had based its post-war legitimacy precisely on the fight against Fascism and had therefore been one of the strongest vectors of transmission of this political tradition. At the international level, the implosion of the Soviet Union and the acceleration of neoliberal globalisation allowed for the affirmation of an extended neoliberal hegemony capable of destroying the breeding ground for any transformation project. In addition to being a symbolic and constitutional pact, anti-fascism was also a (positive) project for the expansion of democracy (De Luna, Revelli 1995; Rapini 2007, 2024). Finally, globalisation has confronted Italy with unprecedented problems such as increased immigration, inadequate citizenship laws and the climate crisis, or has exacerbated old problems such as racism, and anti-fascist cultures have struggled to find effective solutions.

While the period that runs from the birth of anti-fascism until 1989 – especially before 1945 (Droz 2001) – has been the subject of a rich international literature that cannot be summarised in a few lines,

the crisis of anti-fascism in subsequent decades has been covered by a much more limited number of studies (Vergnon 2009; Garcia, Yusta, Tabet, Climaco 2016; Bray 2017; Bresciani 2017). Only more recently has there been a resurgence of interest (Chiantera-Stutte, Pagano 2023; Pirjevec, Pelikan, Ramet 2023; Fulvetti, Ventura, 2024). Still, knowledge about the various transformations of anti-fascism from 1989 to the present remains scarce or limited to the field of public memory (Focardi, Groppo 2013; Focardi 2020; Palheta, Roueff 2020; Bantigny, Palheta 2021; Hofstra 2022; Palheta Jones, Piotrowski, Schuhmacher 2024).

The conference will focus on the last 35 years to answer the following questions: What forms, meanings and practices has anti-fascism taken in Italy and beyond? Which actors have picked up its tradition? What horizon of meanings can it open up in the present? What are the potential seeds of a future anti-fascism and where must we look for them?

Approach and conference themes

The conference has an interdisciplinary approach. It is aimed at scholars from all human and social sciences, in particular history, sociology, anthropology, political science, law, political philosophy, literature, pedagogy, linguistics, arts and media studies. The conference also adopts a multi-scalar approach: it calls for 'micro' analyses, biographies, national case studies, international macro-comparisons and transnational perspectives.

Proposals should include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following conference themes:

- 1) **The political-institutional field**
The first theme concerns the relationship between anti-fascism and international (e.g. EU, UN, ILO, etc.), national and/or local institutions. Proposals should address – but not exclusively – the following themes: regulations and legislation, political parties, public memory politics, political symbolism, toponymy, the meaning of urban space and the use of history and memory by political parties and institutions.
- 2) **Anti-fascist actors and practices**
The second theme focuses on individual and collective social actors who, over the last 35 years, have reclaimed the tradition of anti-fascism, adapting its meaning through concrete practices: student associations; anti-racist, pacifist, feminist, environmentalist, immigrant, teacher and workers' groups or movements; schools and educational experiences.
- 3) **Cultures and countercultures**
The third theme looks at culture in its various forms, with a distinction between representations and languages (anti-fascist or pertaining to anti-fascism), on the one hand, and lifestyles, on the other: music, cinema, theatre, literature, TV series, figurative art, comics, posters and graphics, street art, the 'style' of subcultures (Hebdige 1979) and sport.
- 4) **Global anti-fascism**
The last theme does not focus on a specific object, but on a perspective: anti-fascism as a global and transnational phenomenon. It seeks to document, for example, what social and political conditions, networks or actors allowed – and still allows – books, words, symbols, theories, practices, memories and myths to travel through time and space (Bourdieu 2002).

Submission of abstracts

Abstracts should not exceed 500 words and may be written in Italian, French or English. They must be accompanied by a short bio of max. 150 words. They must be submitted by 15 September 2024 to antifascismconference2025@gmail.com. Authors will be notified of the selection of their abstract by

the end of October 2024.

Participants/speakers must cover their own travel expenses. Accommodation and food will be provided by the conference organisation.

Languages of the conference

Italian, French, English

Date and location

The conference will be held in Reggio Emilia in the historical 'casa Cervi', where the "Alcide Cervi" Institute is based, from 28 to 30 April 2025, on the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Italy from Nazi-Fascism.

Organisers

"Alcide Cervi" Institute, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, "Ferruccio Parri" National Institute.

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