

**Imagining republic.
Political culture, emotions and communication networks
(XVII-XIX centuries)**

As it asserted itself in the first half of the 19th century and beyond, republicanism is traditionally considered as a political culture stemming from the French Revolution, especially in the French historiographical tradition. Based on the principles of natural law and on the national sovereignty of the people, this republicanism is in theory distinguished from a republicanism of the Old Regime, based on civic virtue and the principle of the balance of powers, which is developed in the republican city-states since the Middle Ages, but which seems to be exhausted with the emergence of the commercial companies and the advent of the Freedom of the Moderns. The so-called Cambridge School recalled the distinction between these two republican traditions, but also brought to light the perpetuation and renewal of the old in the modern, as well as the complexity and overlap of a great variety of legacies.

The development of a transnational perspective in the historiography of post-revolutionary political cultures, by drawing attention to the fact that these are nourished by incessant intellectual exchanges with foreign countries, leads in fact to take leave of the two great traditions that we just mentioned. This approach leads to nuance the originality of republicanism stemming from the French Revolution, and rather suggests that it participates in a movement of globalization of the ideas and political practices of the first 19th century, generically defined as liberal; it calls for widening the spectrum of fields of inquiry to Spanish-speaking and Italian-speaking countries. Such historiographical decompartmentalization makes it possible to reassess the contribution to evolution of modern political ideas of geographical areas traditionally considered as marginal, in particular Latin America and Southern Europe, while questioning the intellectual dependence to France, the United States and Great Britain of the political cultures which develop there. In this regard, recent international works and symposia invite us to reconsider the importance of these southern spaces for the transnational evolution of republicanism in contemporary times but also the extent of transatlantic circulation.

The conference will be focused in particular on the communication circuits and reception of the republican political and visual culture, narratives and celebrities from the late 18th century until the second half of the 19th century. This time-frame, covering over an age of profound transformation in the communication system as well as in image technologies, allows to assess those discourses, objects for daily use and images in action in their peculiar contexts, and their role in narrating the republicanism and his protagonists for the men and women of the time. The 19th century was marked by a shift from an «old regime» of the media to a new system of public communication across the whole European continent. New instruments for the transmission of images played a key role, with the diffusion of illustrated books and especially illustrated periodicals, encouraging an exasperated dramatization of the narratives and stimulating a growing attention towards the celebrated contemporaries. This last element, in particular, points to the precocious birth of a true star system unthinkable without the abundance of images and objects circulating widely and rapidly (chimney ornaments, caricatures and lito-photographic portraits, *cartes de visite*) as well as through languages of strong emotional impact, that represent the ancestors of today's infotainment and, therefore, an ideal topic of study to realign the historiography of republicanism with the most recent developments of the international research within the political imagery, media and visual studies.

The conference will analyse the communication circuits that turned Enlightenment republicanism and the imagined or real republics of several generations of patriots and exiles into a real spectacle for the contemporary European audience. The analysis will be carried out through a comparative and transnational investigation that will focus on the images, discourses, symbols and effigies of the major republican experiences and on the development of the republican icons, likenesses, objects and figures that best represent them. The aim of this analysis will be to demonstrate how new media of the time and the spectacularization of politics contributed to the success and the failure of republican imagery through the experimentation of new and old languages and visual forms.

The Summer School 2021 is part of the wider framework of a three-year project financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation; it will have been preceded by a summer school in Madrid in summer 2020, and will be followed by a similar initiative the following year, in 2022, in Argentina. For this reason, the 2021 summer school will have among its objectives to give more space to historiography and to Italian historians, also by virtue of the geographical proximity of the Ascona to Italy.