

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Fascist and Neo-Fascist Networks between Italy and France: migration, circulation of ideas and political legacy, 1930s-1950s

SUPERVISORS

	First name	LAST NAME	University	Research Unit
Supervisor	Emilie-Anne	PÉPY	USMB	LLSH/LLSETI
Co-Supervisor	Pietro	PINNA	UNITA	Cultures, Politics and Society Department

Fields of study

History

Requirements (academic background, languages...) needed to apply for this research topic

- Mandatory training needed to apply for this research topic: Master degree in Contemporary History, or any equivalent degree
- Language skills: candidates must at least read French and Italian

5 main KEYWORDS

Migration; Fascist Heritage; European Integration; Transnational Fascism, Neo-Fascism and Post-Fascism; Continuity-Discontinuity

ABSTRACT (250 words max.)

In recent decades, scholars have increasingly studied fascism from a transnational perspective, emphasising the dissemination of fascist ideas and political practices across European and transatlantic contexts. This research project intends to contribute to this framework by investigating the development of fascist and neo-fascist networks and the circulation of ideas between France and Italy from the 1930s to the 1950s. The presence of a large Italian immigrant community in France represented a strategic asset for the fascist regime, particularly in the 1930s, to strengthen its foreign policy objectives. Through a vast network of associations and institutions, the Italian

regime extended its control over a segment of the Italian community in France, thereby contributing to the dissemination of fascist ideology and political practices within the country.

Beyond the conventional chronological boundaries of the fascist regime, this project aims to analyze the **cultural legacy** of fascism in France and the construction of **neo-fascist political and cultural networks** during the 1940s and 1950s. The research will therefore explore, through individual narratives and the history of specific groups, the network engaged in organizing neo-fascist formations in both countries. It will evaluate the **theoretical and organizational links** among these groups, and the extent of **continuity** between the fascist experience and the neo-fascists post-WWII. Particular attention will be paid to how Italian and French neo-fascist groups, also connected to regimes such as those of Franco and Salazar, reconceived the **idea of Europe** during a time when the emerging anti-communist European order was being shaped.

Research aims and methodology

The primary outcome of this project will be the realization of a **Ph.D. thesis** on the fascist and neo-fascist networks between Italy and France. This study will be grounded in the frameworks of **transnational fascism** and of **cultural and political heritage**, also considering the studies on the diffusion of fascism in France and Europe during the interwar period, as well as the neo-fascist networks established after WWII. While the project focuses mainly on France and Italy, it considers also experiences of Spanish and Portuguese extreme right-wing regimes and even intellectual debates with Swiss extreme right-wing sympathizers.

The project aims to be **at the crossroads of European intellectual history, migration history and workers history**, since both the latter have shaped Nationalist discourses in the interwar period and have given impetus to the European integration after 1945. How transnational fascism and Neo-fascism have connected to transnational migrations, working issues on a European scale and European integration? This particular way to figure out fascist cultural and political heritage ensures a strong theoretical and practical basis to the project, anchoring its consistency into issues to be further explored.

In line with this ambition, the project will adopt an **interdisciplinary approach**: during the research, the Ph.D. student will undertake to combine his/her historiographical skills with competencies in Political Sciences, Anthropology and Language Sciences. The methodology provided by these disciplines will allow the student to dig into the role of organisational structures, behavioral schemes and discourse construction by neo/post-fascist right-wingers. To thoroughly address the different questions raised by the project, the student will utilize a range of sources from various public and private **French and Italian archives**, considering, if appropriate, the use of a prosopographical approach to better elucidate the structures of fascist and neo-fascist networks. **European archives**, especially those of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (1948-1961), will also be delved into.

Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

The historiography of fascism in France during the interwar period has been the focus of numerous studies (e.g. Milza, Cavarocchi, Schor, Pinna, Maltone). Recent research has increasingly emphasized transatlantic networks, highlighting how some fascist ideas, such as corporatism, became central to the development of authoritarian regimes across Europe and Latin America (e.g. A. Costa Pinto, F. Finchelstein, *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in*

Europe and Latin America, London, New York 2019, A. Costa Pinto (ed.), *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, London 2017; A. Bauerkämper, G. Rossoliński-Liebe (eds.), *Fascism without Borders. Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, New York 2017). Other studies have adopted comparative approaches, examining the influence of fascist ideology on European politics between the wars (A. Costa Pinto, A. Kallis (eds.), *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, Basingstoke 2014; J. Nelis, A. Morelli, D. Praet, *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe 1918-1945*, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 2015. See also: <https://anr.fr/Project-ANR-21-CE27-0015>). Fascist internationalism remains a key issue in the historical debate and, even if the idea is debunked, analysing this phenomenon tells a great deal about fascism (Daniel Hedinger, “Fascist Internationalism: From a Vanished Institution to a Failed Concept?”, *Journal of Modern European History*, 2025, 23/2, p. 147-166). Scholarship has also analyzed neo-fascist movements from a transnational perspective (M. Albanese, P. Del Hierro, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century: Spain, Italy and the Global Neo-Fascist Network*, London 2016), focusing, however, particularly on the 1960s and 1970s (Olivier Dard, *Doctrinaires, vulgarisateurs et passeurs des droites radicales au xx^e siècle, Europe-Amériques*, Berne, Peter Lang, 2013). The post-1945 careers of former fascists, especially in European institutions, and their involvement in transnational networks, deserve greater attention, since fascism was not at all deprived from specific visions of Europe (Simona Giustibelli, *Europa, Paneuropa, Antieuropa : il dialogo tra Francia democratica e Italia fascista nell'epoca del memorandum Briand (1929-1934)*, Soveria Manelli, Rubbettino, 2006; Georges-Henri Soutou, *Europa! Les Projets européens de l'Allemagne nazie et de l'Italie fasciste*, Paris, 2022). There is also currently an acute debate on the connections that could be made between neo-fascist movements and what is increasingly called post-fascism (Enzo Traverso, *Les Nouveaux Visages du fascisme*, Paris, 2017; Marc Lazar, “Fascisme, populisme et l'Italie de la Ligue et des Frères d'Italie”, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 2023). This makes all the more interesting to have a closer look at the issue of fascist heritage.

In the global framework of this historiography, bridges have thus still to be unveiled between the 1930s, the 1940s and the 1950s in order to bring to light continuities and discrepancies. As for workers migrations, the focus has been put on national policies of control and continuous cultural and social grip on nationals, as well as on bilateral negotiations (Anita Böcker (dir.), *Regulation of Migration: International Experiences*, Amsterdam, 1998; Paul-André Rosental, « Migrations, souveraineté, droits sociaux », *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 2011), but we still know little about the political trends that made these policies converge on the European scale and influenced the European policy on the matter.

The central innovation of this project lies in offering a **new approach to studying transnational fascist networks and the heritage of fascism** in France. The first key innovation pertains to **chronology**: the project aims to examine elements of continuity and discontinuity between the 1930s, when fascism consolidated its networks in France, and the 1940s and 1950s, decades which are frequently overlooked when considering fascist heritage. Secondly, it intends to investigate the **role played by the Italian immigrant community** in France – or at least a part of it – in supporting and maintaining fascist structures, organizations and ideas in order to understand possible subsequent **connections** with postwar neo-fascist political formations. Particular attention will be paid to organisations such as Fasci, Case d'Italia, Dopolavoro, and Dante Alighieri. Finally, a further innovative aspect will involve seeking to understand how and whether transnational neo-fascist networks between France and Italy connected with others from various European countries to construct a **vision of Europe** that, drawing on previous intellectual reflections from the interwar period, integrated into the cultural and political discourse of the 1940s and 1950s.

Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

The project may be considered well aligned with the pre-requisites and demands of the CHORAL program. It is oriented towards academic excellence since it is based on mastery of the state of the art and innovative interrogations. It falls under “Intangible cultural heritage and identity narratives” and aims to highlight European people stories as well as the story of ideas that made contemporary Europe. It also meets fully the requirement for internationalisation. It focuses indeed on France and Italy with a strong interest for broader transnational networks established in Spain, Portugal and Switzerland. The project aims to investigate archives in several countries, which means that the mobility requirement will not only be an obligation to be fulfilled but a real opportunity for the student.

Supervisors are members of research laboratories and doctoral boards where interdisciplinarity is much valued. Pietro Pinna is professor of Contemporary History at the Cultures, Politics and Society Department, one of the largest departments at the University of Turin. He is a member of the scientific board of the PhD programme in Global History of Empires. His research expertise focuses on Italian Migration and transnational fascism. The PhD programme includes professors and researchers of Global History, Economic History, History of Political Thought, Political Science and Anthropology. Participation in its activities will enable the student to further develop his/her expertise in the history of fascisms and migration studies, while fostering scholarly exchange with experts in various fields relevant to his/her research. The department’s vibrant and intellectually stimulating environment will provide a valuable context for both his/her academic advancement and personal growth.

Emilie-Anne Pépy is professor of Modern History at the Languages, Literatures and Human Sciences Department in the University Savoie Mont Blanc. Her research expertise lies in environmental and cultural history in the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, with a particular focus on cultural transfers and circulations. She will be involved in the supervision of the PhD student since Anne-Sophie Nardelli (see below) is currently working on her habilitation thesis but has not yet defended it.

Anne-Sophie Nardelli will provide scientific support to the project supervising team. She is associate professor of Contemporary History at the Languages, Literatures and Human Sciences Department in the University Savoie Mont Blanc. Her research expertise lies in international, transnational and transborder relations, with a focus on the Franco-Italian relationship. Both co-supervisors belong to the LLSETI lab (Languages, Literature, Societies, International and Transnational Studies) which is interdisciplinary by nature since it gathers researchers from a wide range of studies (History, Literature, Arts, English, Italian and Spanish studies), who may particularly help with their expertise in Language Sciences. This laboratory and its members belong to the doctoral board CST (Culture, Societies, Territories), which may provide additional resources in fields such as Sociology. The PhD student will therefore benefit from a challenging and open-minding environment.

Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

The main output will be the publication of the PhD thesis on the topic here proposed. The preparation of at least one academic paper to be published in a history scientific journal will be an important milestone. The PhD student will participate in the scientific meetings deemed appropriate by the supervisors to present the results of his/her research.

Estimated schedule

1st year: State of the art; workplan, establishing the corpus of archives and specifying the questions it allows to deal with; planning of the specific periods to be spent at the two Universities.

2nd year: Fine-tuning of archive research

3rd year: Final drafting of the thesis