

The Great Depression and the rural world in South-eastern Europe; evaluating and representing the agrarian change

Abstract

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Brief Description

The Great Depression initially appeared in Europe in the form of an agrarian crisis; In the beginning of the 1930s the agrarian crisis had a general negative influence on European economies and societies, evidenced by the considerable fall in the prices of agricultural products (LoN, 1931). Especially -but not solely- the rural countries of South-Eastern Europe faced deep changes in their structures of foreign trade which were brought about by the international crisis. In the first place, the session aims to link the structures of the rural economy of the South-eastern European region (Gerschenkron, 1976) to the economic recession following the Great Depression (Mitrany 1945 & Lampe, Jackson, 1982). Secondly, a global conception is required, with regards to transnational action taken in order to tackle the new conditions in national economies based on the primary sector: for example, the Stresa Conference, in September 1932, considered means of reviving European trade (Eichengreen, 1995) in order to counterbalance the expanding economic protectionism, as concerns especially the tariffs and quotas on agricultural product (Kaiser, n. ed. 2015). The Stresa Conference results provide us with an image of the European rural crisis in the early 1930s (LoN, 1932), just a few steps before the generalization of economic protectionism, emphasizing primarily on the organization of the rural markets (Chatriot, Leblanc, Lynch, 2012, & Brégianni, 2019).

The Session Proposal's Main Goals, Objectives, and Challenges

Having traced the intersections between the European interwar rural crisis and the overall economic conditions during the Great Depression, the proposed session targets the evaluation of unexplored primary sources describing the quantitative indicators in the -largely agricultural- countries of South-Eastern Europe. The aim is to associate this objective parameter with the centralized modernization policies applied in the geographical region under examination, accentuating thus the State's intervention and role. Besides the emergence of a technocratic framework and the technical and organizational innovation, the recession provoked social responses, such as the strengthening of rural cooperatives -although, in some cases these were progressively assimilated into centralized mechanisms- or significant protest movements in rural areas. The exploration of the social impact of the crisis is then included in the Session's goals, as is the analysis of visual representations of the interwar rural crisis: we will

attempt a bottom-up interpretation, in the sense that questions arise as to how the effects of the crisis in the rural world are depicted in photography, film, and art works.

As a methodological stake, the session proposes that recession phenomena in the rural world could be investigated in an interdisciplinary approach.

Synergies

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