



6 MAY 2025
WORKSHOP

CHARITY PROFESSIONALS AND CHARITY GOVERNANCE (XV-XIX CENTURIES)

FONDAZIONE DEL MONTE DI BOLOGNA E RAVENNA
VIA DELLE DONZELLE 2 • BOLOGNA





CALL FOR PAPERS

Charities were key institutions for the sick, poor, and marginalized in medieval and early modern societies. A wealth of historical studies has clearly documented that the age of the Renaissance not only saw a rise in organized charity work but it pioneered radical changes in ways of helping the poor and the needy as well, leading to increasing specialization and professionalization, from loosely structured aid systems to more formalized institutions, often influenced by a unique blending of religious, political, and economic factors.

In the main, charitable agencies operated as mechanisms for providing community support and promoting social cohesion. Almost everywhere aid-systems were locally run organizations and varied greatly across regions in terms of efficacy and scope, yet they followed similar trends and laid the groundwork for later welfare practices, blending tradition with remarkable organizational innovation.

Early modern charitable agencies increasingly came to rely on a complex mix of trained and semi-trained professionals, practitioners, civic officials, and volunteers who facilitated services aimed at relief and support for people in need. The growing professionalization of administration and staff reflects a complex and poorly explored intersection of religious and civic motivations, evolving administrative and managerial skills, and early governance practices.

The role of professional staff in early modern welfare agencies can provide a lens into the structures of early social work and charity-based aid. Over time, these agencies further evolved in organization and approach, paving the way for the professionalized welfare and health models of modern societies.



Adopting a broad chronological and geographical approach, we aim at exploring and comparing the evolution of professional and managerial roles in charitable institutions: 1) how pre-modern charities worked and developed with a diverse mix of professionals and community members; 2) how staff training, role, and composition changed; 3) how traditional civic and religious motivations clashed or interacted with growing professional governance; 4) how management and administration developed as institutions became larger and more formalized over time; 5) how the management of endowments was affected; 6) how professionalization led to the establishment of new organizations.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The workshop aims at charting in a comparative fashion the transformation of “charity governance” across a broad chronological spectrum and provides a first venue for the discussion of research topics. The first workshop will be held at the Fondazione del Monte di Bologna e Ravenna (via delle Donzelle, 2 - Bologna) on May 6 (11 am - 5 pm). A second and final workshop to discuss research progress will be held in Naples at the Fondazione Banco di Napoli next Winter in a date to be announced. The proceedings of the workshop will be published.

Research proposals (max. 500 words) are invited for submission via e-mail (centromonti@fondazione-del-monte.it) by 16 March 2025.

Authors should include an updated cv and can expect notification by 31 March 2025. The Fondazione will cover participants' accommodation costs and contribute to travel expenses.