

Call for Papers

Uneven regional development: “younger Europe” in transcontinental and intercontinental networks

The conference organized by the German Historical Institute Warsaw in cooperation with the Centre for Medieval Studies, Prague, November 4-6, 2021

Uneven development is most commonly defined in terms of the gap between highly developed, industrialized countries and agrarian countries whose economies are dominated by primary sector activities. Historians have been pointing out for years that the inequalities prevailing in the world arise from structural conditions that are resistant to change and therefore develop very slowly (F. Braudel). Thus, inequalities are not only the consequences of the Industrial Revolution; they certainly also existed in pre-modern societies.

But how do inequalities arise and in which areas do they express themselves? Are they the result of the non-simultaneity of development in different regions, which is partly due to geographical conditions (“disadvantaged places”) and thus a constant in pre-industrial societies? Or are they created through interactions and confrontations with more economically and technologically advanced structures? If the latter is true, then inequalities are caused by external factors.

The starting point of the conference is the recognition that “younger Europe”, which J. Kłoczowski essentially equates with East Central Europe, although the Balkans, Kievan Rus, and Scandinavia could be considered a part of it in some centuries, has been included in continental and intercontinental interaction networks since the Early Middle Ages. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the economies of north-western Eurasia were already remarkably entangled. For example, between about 900 and 950, silver mines in Uzbekistan were running at full speed to serve markets that ranged from the Urals in the east to the Celtic lands on the Atlantic coast in the west, and from the Crimea in the south to central Sweden in the north. But such interactions did not just involve the exchange of precious metals and goods, which stimulated commercial cycles. Foreign trade (along with tributes and booty) formed the fiscal and economic basis of the rule of nascent early medieval dynasties. In parallel, the elites of the emerging states converted to Christianity, to both the Latin and Orthodox rites.

From the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, a profound transformation of society and culture took place, resulting in the increasing emergence of cities with borough rights, the resettlement of the countryside with free peasants, the construction of castles, the expansion of written communication, and the founding of monasteries and universities. These phenomena spread from west to east. In the late fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth century, Ottoman campaigns led to the conquest of large parts of the Balkans, which initiated the peripheralization of this region.

This transformation raises the question of to what extent, and in what regional terms, networks and interactions deepened or – on the contrary – levelled out existing social and economic differences in the 9th – 16th century in development. Papers that focus on the following topics and explore them in comparative perspective are encouraged:

- Trade and goods production
- Monetization and commercialization
- Sovereigns and estates
- Cities and borough rights
- The status of peasants and rural commoners
- The foundation of universities and monasteries
- Imaginations of unevenness and the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous.

Conference languages are German and English.

Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the organizers.

Please send proposals with an abstract (no longer than one page / 1800 characters) and a short CV in German or English by 15 September 2021 to adamczyk@dhi.waw.pl

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