

Call for papers for the session 158

“Marriage patterns, agency in households, and economic growth”

for the XVIth World Economic History Congress, Stellenbosch, 9-13 July, 2012

When addressing the roots of development, many scholars look at developments at the level of the household. This is not only true for development economists, but also for economic historians, who have claimed that this was where some of the driving forces behind change materialized. Over the past three decades the significance of decisions made at the household level has gradually also been acknowledged by theoretical economists (e.g. Gary Becker), who stress the fundamental importance of the switch from ‘quantity to quality’ of offspring as a cornerstone of modern economic growth. Moreover, many scholars have claimed that coercion, conflict and cooperation relationships based on gender differences at the household operate at all levels of the economy. The crucial role of the household is further acknowledged by the increasing focus of economic historians on changes at the micro-level, notably since Hajnal’s work on the European Marriage Pattern and De Vries’ hypotheses about the crucial role of households in the ‘industrious revolution’.

These issues are closely linked to the question of agency: how were households created and what did decision-making processes in households look like? How did changes in women’s opportunities to progress reflect on their decision-making at home? How have the links between economic development and progress in women’s status operated in different societies? More in particular, we are interested in gender-related issues such as female empowerment with respect to the interplay between the household and the economy. Since the role of women – but also children and other family members – in households is often determined by cultural factors, these issues should be researched in a comparative way.

The session “Marriage patterns, agency in households, and economic growth” will bring specialists together from all over the world to look at these and related themes in a global comparative perspective. To this end the session will address topics such as marriage patterns, agency, human capital formation, labour participation, wage gaps, employment segregation and financial management in historical households. This approach will allow us to sharpen explanations for the diverging development of Western Europe and developing regions after 1800 that start from the household level. It will also allow us to unravel the historical dynamics of different gender inequities in relation to the dynamics of economic growth in different regions.

Session organisers:

Maria Camou (University of Montevideo)

Jaco Zuijderduijn (Utrecht University)

Tine De Moor (Utrecht University)

Abstracts for this session should contain no more than 400 words and should be sent to the corresponding organiser, Jaco Zuijderduijn (at c.j.zuijderduijn@uu.nl) before the 1st of March. The paper presenters will be informed about their selection before the 15th of

April. Papers should be submitted before the 15th of June in order to give session participants and commentators sufficient time to prepare.