

Call for Papers  
to Session 214  
on the XVth World Economic History Congress, Stellenbosch, 9-13 July, 2012:

## **WORK FOR LEISURE? ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, WOMEN'S WORK AND LEISURE IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT**

This session aims to advance the study of time allocation, by investigating and explaining the variances in the appreciation of leisure throughout history and across regions. The extent, to which leisure time is valued, varies highly in different societies and over time. It is probably safe to say that today 'free time is money', although this statement probably holds for societies with high levels of labour productivity more than for labour-intensive economies. One could for instance argue that colonial policies were directed at diminishing leisure of the colonized people, which as a by-effect generated extra free time among the working classes in the metropolis. But also within societies, leisure is appreciated differently:

leisure by the well-to-do, for instance, may generate (conspicuous) consumption, whereas leisure to the poor may be conceived as a burden. Also, men's and women's free time most likely is valued differently, and some have even gone so far as to suggest that this contributed to the gender wage gap (Becker 1985).

There are at least three reasons why this topic is relevant. First, leisure can both be an indicator for economic underdevelopment (e.g. Boserup 1965) and for economic wellbeing (e.g. De Vries 2008). The allocation of time over paid and unpaid work is strongly related to any time that is not allocated to these resources. Hence, changes in preferences for leisure time also affect the allocation of paid work and housework. Second, while both the industrious and industrial revolutions affected leisure time, the mechanisms differed quite substantially. Industriousness had a negative impact on the amount of leisure time (De Vries 1994), whereas technological innovations during industrialization allowed for substitution of labour-intensive work activities and housework. Third, while on the macro level historians have observed an immense increase in the variation in and number of leisure activities in the early twentieth century, in some historical contexts, time spent by married women on housework did not decrease (Mokyr 2000).

In sum, we want to explore the relation between leisure and work activities, while paying attention to gender differences and the level of economic development. We are especially interested in papers making regional or national comparisons and/or comparisons over time. Topics could for example include changes in the availability and division of leisure time due to technological advances, the acquisition of cheap labour due to in-migration or colonization or changes in norms caused by secularization and changes in political climates.

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