

# Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20016]

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## Proposed title of the session

Mercantilism and Cameralism – New Approaches and Reconfigurations, Lessons for Development, Explanations for Divergence?

## Abstract

Mercantilism used to have a bad press in the twentieth century. Eli F. Heckscher expressed a rather skeptical view of it. Keynes on the other hand was positive, but – apart from the late adherents to the German Historical School in economics (Friedrich List, Wilhelm Roscher, Gustav Schmoller et al.), who might be called late Cameralists – he represented a minority voice. Towards the mid-20th century writers stressed the rent seeking aspect of mercantilist political economy. They argued that this was, after all, a set of axioms designed to foster the interests of particular groups at the expense of the larger rest of society. Arguably the most famous statement had come from Adam Smith [An Inquiry into the Causes and Nature of the Wealth of Nations, 1776]. Whilst acknowledging the usefulness of the Navigation Acts in terms of fostering the development of a navy used for safeguarding Britain's commercial interests on the high seas, Smith deeply disliked any interventionist intrusions into the market by the state.

In recent years, however, some cornerstones of this paradigm, going back essentially to Smith and Hume (who were amongst the first writers to profusely criticize the idea of regulated economies), have come under attack. This especially pertains to the idea that certain economic recipes and strategies have an axiomatic character, i.e. would be applicable regardless of their idiosyncratic location points in time and space. This critique has come especially from scholars working on the 'German' or land-locked version of Mercantilist economics (Cameralism). This was a set of Mercantilist ideas that had a stronger focus on the fiscal aspects, as well as the allocative role of the State, impersonated by a 'strong' ruler and his (her) administrative structures, departments and institutions in terms of controlling and regulating the market, coordinating economic decision-making processes and in this way initiating economic development. Some have argued that Cameralist writers had a better understanding of economic development from the viewpoint of economic backwardness. Similar things had been said earlier on about Mercantilism, an approach, however that tends to be forgotten by and large, especially when considering the evolution of the *Ideengeschichte* or history of ideas in political economy over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In this way the workshop aims to bring together historians and economists who have contributed to recent re-configurations of Mercantilism-Cameralism and their impact on people's lives, views and choices, especially policies of development. It seeks to do so from several angles: (1) the intellectual history (*Ideengeschichte*) of political economy (history of Mercantilism/Cameralism as an economic discourse); (2) Economic history (data-based history of real factors, esp. macroeconomic variables over time), as well as (3) modern possibilities of adaptation and application of older (pre-classical) ideas for growth and development studies/development economics today.

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## I. Corresponding Session Organiser

PD Dr. Philipp Robinson Rössner (University of Manchester and Universität Leipzig (Asst.Prof./Lecturer) [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])

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## II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Lars Magnusson (Uppsala Universitet [Sweden])
3. Prof. Toshiaki Tamaki (Kyoto Sangyo Univ / Div of Economics (Professor) [Japan])

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## III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Carl Wennerlind (Barnard Dept of History (Assoc. Prof.) [United States of America])
3. Sophus Reinert (Harvard Business School (Asst Professor) [United States of America])
4. Erik S. Reinert (University of Tallinn (Professor) [Estonia])
5. Marcus Sandl (University of Basel, Dept of History (Professor) [Switzerland])
6. Bertram Schefold (University of Frankfurt / Germany, Dept of Economics (Professor) [Germany])
7. Moritz Isenmann (Department of History (Lecturer/Asst Prof) [Germany])
8. Prasanna Parthasarathi (Boston College, Dept of History (Professor) [United States of America])
9. Steve Pincus (Yale University Dept of History (Professor) [United States of America])
10. Georg Christ (University of Manchester, Div. of History (Lecturer / Asst. Prof.) [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])