

# Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20078]

---

## Proposed title of the session

Feudalism and the market. Explaining economic growth in the Middle Ages

## Abstract

For a long time, lordship and market have been regarded by historians as two opposite, antagonistic elements, unable to coexist in the same economic and social system. In the great debates on the transition from the late fifties and then again in the seventies, the cities and with them the market (since it was thought that the market was largely an urban phenomenon) were often presented as exogenous factors to feudalism, as non-feudal islands in a feudal sea

This perception changed significantly in the 1980s and 1990s thanks largely to the investigations of British medievalists on the commercialization of English society and economy in the Middle Ages, driven among others by Richard H. Britnell and Christopher Dyer. Beyond Britain, research in this area has also benefited from the reflections of the French medievalist Guy Bois who, in work dating from the 1970s and especially from the late 1980s, placed the market at the centre of his concerns, not as a non-exogenous or marginal element, but as inherent to the structure of the feudal system and medieval economic growth. Bois has developed his reasoning in later works, notably in his examination of the great later medieval depression. Both contributions have led to some questioning of the old paradigm established by Postan and Duby more than sixty years ago (at the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Paris in 1950) concerning the crisis of the late Middle Ages, a fundamentally neo-Malthusian explanatory basis but one that also was supported by Marxist historians, such as R.H. Hilton.

In recent years, the questioning of the role of lords and/or markets as agents of economic change has found its ways into studies and projects beyond the Anglophone literature and, most obviously, has resulted in an international (French, Spanish, Italian and British) project on the nature and explanation of 'conjuncture' c. 1300, a theme that has been explored with different emphases in different national historiographical contexts but tends to consideration of the factors that played upon and explained change in economic development at a crisis point in the western European medieval economy. This has led to several conferences in the last decade, the proceedings of which have mostly been published.

Most medievalists are now, to some degree or other, integrated into these developing explanations of the contribution of the market to economic growth, or at the least economic change. However, such inclusion - important from a conceptual point of view - does not mean that the market was the real engine of the medieval growth, if indeed measurable economic growth is identifiable in this period. Assuming economic change and accepting evidence for growth, what then was the engine?

The session aims to discuss economic growth in the late Middle Ages and the driving forces behind it, with both empirical (measuring growth and setting its chronologies) and theoretical or interpretative contributions. Papers offering a comparative perspective, and/or perspectives upon regions as yet little studied are especially welcome.

---

## I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Phillipp R Schofield (Aberystwyth University [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])

---

## II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
  2. Prof. Antoni Furio (Universitat de Valencia [Spain])
- 

## III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Antoni Furio (Universitat de Valencia [Spain])
3. Bruce M.S. Campbell (The Queen's University, Belfast [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
4. Luciano Palermo (Università della Tuscia [Italy])
5. Sandro Carocci (Roma Tor Vergata [Italy])
6. Carlos Laliena (Universidad de Zaragoza [Spain])
7. Marian Dygo (University of Warsaw [Poland])
8. Francois Menant (Ecole Normale Supérieure [France])
9. Mathieu Arnoux (Paris VII [France])
10. Michael Limberger (University of Ghent [Belgium])