

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20108]

Proposed title of the session

Welfare, inequality and standards of living compared: America, Europe and Asia, ca. 1500-2000

Abstract

Measuring welfare, inequality and standards of living of a specific society make sense only in historical and geographical terms, that is, when confronting these indicators with the same in other contemporary societies, or through time. A specific human group is more or less unequal, or has high or poor standards of living, only in comparison to others. For instance, a highly unequal human group may have higher income, and living standards, than a less unequal one, which may be poorer and had a worse access to goods. And Lower income families in a more egalitarian society can have better standards of living than the same groups in a highly unequal society. So, comparative perspective is the best way to achieve useful results in this field.

Historical and economic research has recently made significant progress in measuring welfare, inequality and standards of living along human history of the last five centuries. This has been possible thanks to, among other accomplished tasks, great improvements in the study of prices, salaries, household income and expenditure, literacy, and, generally speaking, living standards from economic as well as biological or cultural long-term perspective. An abundant and influential literature has so increased our knowledge about significant phenomena in human history: 1) the evolution of living standards in America, Asia and Europe in an era of increased contacts between these continents since the XVth. Century; 2) the so-called Great Divergence between these continents, evident from the Industrial Revolution, but which would have started earlier; 3) the effects of globalization in goods available to individuals and families, and the very concept of welfare; and 4) the behaviour of inequality between families, individuals and countries in the last centuries. Despite these progresses, there is still a lot to be known: firstly, today available critical mass data poses new challenges, as it contradicts some widely accepted assumptions; secondly, a more accurate comparison between different societies calls for new methodological instruments.

So, this session offers an excellent opportunity for those researchers willing to share concepts, sources, methods and results with other colleagues interested in long-term, and cross countries, comparative studies of welfare, inequality and living standards in three of the main continents of the world, from 1500 to the present. This session aims to continue and expand the discussions held in the IV Congress of Latin American Economic History (Bogotá, Colombia, July 2014), reaching a wider global perspective. You are, then, kindly invited to submit a proposal to take part in it. In order to broaden the range of participants, proposals can be submitted in English, Spanish, Portuguese or French.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Julio C. Djenderedjian (Instituto Ravignani, Universidad de Buenos Aires [Argentina])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Rafael Dobado Gonzalez (Universidad Complutense, Madrid [Spain])
3. Prof. Maria Ines Moraes (Universidad de la Republica [Uruguay])
4. Prof. Daniel V. Santilli (Universidad de Buenos Aires [Argentina])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Rafael Dobado Gonzalez (Universidad Complutense, Madrid [Spain])
3. Maria Ines Moraes (Universidad de la Republica [Uruguay])
4. Daniel V. Santilli (Universidad de Buenos Aires [Argentina])
5. Moramay Lopez Alonso (Rice University [United States of America])
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9. Manuel Gonzalez Mariscal (Universidad de Sevilla [Spain])
10. Jorge Daniel Gelman (Universidad de Buenos Aires [Argentina])
11. Leticia Arroyo Abad (Middlebury College [United States of America])
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