

# Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20125]

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## Proposed title of the session

Rethinking centre and periphery: "north" and "south" in the Mediterranean, c. 1200-c. 1600.

## Abstract

The centre-periphery model has been widely used to describe the difference between economic regions that were close to each other and/or in interaction with each other in the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean. According to the original model, a centre-periphery economic relationship was detrimental to the periphery, because the centre dictated the terms of trade, and this ultimately caused economic stagnation in the periphery. In recent years, this hypothesis has been called into question. It has been found to be overly deterministic: economic activity does tend to concentrate in a specific area, while geographic location and the initial position of economic players are important, but variation in development over time is possible. The model has also been criticized for over-emphasizing international trade which, historically, is considered a major factor in a 'western-style' economic development, and for underplaying the significance and diversity of economic activity within the regions in question, thus missing the great variety of solutions provided by past human societies to the problem of survival, growth and development.

This session starts instead from the premise that there is not one particular element that can be accepted as the decisive one in explaining development in complex historical societies and that, although there were frequent and sophisticated commercial relations between economic areas, development, integration and specialization took place mostly within regions until well into the sixteenth century. When research moves from commercial relations between regions to economic structures within regions, the categories of centre and periphery, of north and south, become less sharp. The Mediterranean in the transitional period from the late Middle Ages to the early modern period is a case in point. We wish to focus in particular on:

- 1) The operation of late medieval and early modern markets: is the hypothesis that they functioned differently from modern and contemporary ones verified? Were they conditioned by different rules, many of them of a social, even ethical nature? Did the entrepreneurs of the time operate in networks of personal relationships and family ties more than their contemporary descendants?
- 2) In view of a less deterministic assessment of local and regional economic entities, is there scope for a re-evaluation of commercial and, ultimately, institutional and political relations between different Mediterranean regions? Does placing emphasis on local and regional production, markets, commercial itineraries and economic agents help qualify our traditional perception of such relations?
- 3) If we wish to challenge gradualist views of economic development between the preindustrial and the industrial period, is it helpful to seek the roots of the economic primacy of certain European regions in specific circumstances dating back to remote times?

This session aims to bring together scholars specializing in different parts of the Mediterranean, in its Christian and Muslim worlds, with papers on Italy, Spain, the Maghreb, the Aegean, focusing on innovative interpretations of economic change within these regions as well as of exchange relations between them.

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## I. Corresponding Session Organiser

AssistProf Eleni Sakellariou (University of Crete (Assistant Professor) [Greece])

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## II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
  2. Assoc.Prof Pinuccia F. Simbula (University of Sassari (Associate Professor) [Italy])
  3. Assoc.Prof David Igual Luis (University of Castile - La Mancha (Associate Professor) [Spain])
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## III. Expected Participant(s)

1. Adela Fábregas García (University of Granada [Spain])
2. Roser Salicrú i Lluch (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Barcelona [Spain])
3. Giampiero Nigro (University of Florence [Italy])
4. Angela Orlandi (University of Florence [Italy])
5. Mohamed Ouerfelli (University of Aix-Marseille [France])
6. Enrico Basso (University of Turin [Italy])
7. No input.