

CALL FOR PAPERS

“Government and agricultural change in comparative perspective”

**Workshop arranged within the International Scientific Coordination Network (GDRI):
“CRISES and Changes in the European Countryside in the long run”
(CRICEC)**

Lund, Sweden
16–17 October, 2014

The agricultural transformation of preindustrial Europe is a classical area of research, which has drawn attention to several important factors promoting growth. The prevailing focus on single regions or countries in European research has led researchers to put forward different aspects as key factors in the agricultural transformation. One such key factor proposed has been the actions and interventions of government. This meeting will critically examine reforms as solutions to problems in historical rural society and aims at by comparative papers provide a general understanding of the impact of government and its potential effect on escaping re-current crises.

Historical evidence show that state reforms, and attempts at reform, in the past have gradually been implemented to eliminate the hold of dominant elites on rural society, and to do away with feudal rights and redistribute land ownership. The process, the extent and the limits of these reforms require a thorough re-examination of multiple contexts in Europe to be able to identify common patterns and context-specific solutions. Most importantly is also to connect the government actions to outcome, in terms of escaping crises through growth in production or productivity within agriculture.

In many areas in Europe, the State became active in promoting agriculture during the later stages of the *Ancien Regime*. Besides issuing enclosure acts, laws enhancing commercialization and investments were passed. In practice this led to enhanced possibilities for cultivators to individually or collectively arrange land and production protected by stronger property rights. Examples of this are laws passed allowing for splitting farms into smaller units, to trade, and to rearrange landholdings.

One important aspect is the outcome of the reforms and particularly whether government actually changed the rural society into a society escaping crises and experiencing growth. Several researchers have stressed the importance of institutional change, such as liberal agrarian reforms and enclosures. The impact of institutions on growth has been discussed extensively. Proponents of the positive effects of the ‘right’ institutions have advocated the economic incentives of secure and stable property rights, the possibilities of flexibility with individual decision making in agriculture, and the commercial possibilities of integrated and deregulated markets. Critics, on the other hand, have downplayed the role of institutions, pointing to cases where well-functioning institutions have emerged long before growth took

place, or arguing that it was not institutional change within agriculture but urban development and market demand that caused the rising output in agriculture.

The aim of this meeting is to study the role of government and reforms on growth during agricultural transformations. Papers from all parts of Europe are of need to reach a general understanding of the importance of reforms for change in agriculture and in the rural society.

The call for papers is thus open for all researchers in all disciplinary fields interested in this specific topic. The workshop covers the period from the late 17th century to the early twentieth century for all parts of Europe, and regional empirical analysis or comparative studies are preferred. The workshop will consist of paper presentations and joint discussions and interested paper-givers are expected to send in proposals (abstracts) to the coordinators via e-mail no later than May 30th, 2014. Abstracts should contain aim, topic, area and time period and a short text on potential findings of the study (300-500 words).

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