

Call for papers:

‘Marriage patterns, household formation and economic development’

Utrecht, the Netherlands
7th-10th October 2010

Sponsored by HI-POD and ERC starting grant

In October 2010 the Centre for Global Economic History at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, will organise an international conference on the theme of household formation and economic development.

Households are arguably the most fundamental unit used in the analysis of economic and demographic behaviour and the decisions taken at a household level are crucial for economic development. For example decisions relating to family, savings, and investment in human capital are all instrumental in fostering a fruitful environment for development. Over the past three decades the significance of decisions made at the household level has gradually been acknowledged by theoretical economists. An illustration of this is the work of Gary Becker, who stresses the fundamental importance of the switch from ‘quantity to quality’ of offspring as a corner stone of modern economic growth. The crucial role of the household is further acknowledged by the increasing focus of economic historians on changes at the micro-level, notably since Hajnal’s work on the European Marriage Pattern and De Vries’ hypotheses about the crucial role of households in the ‘industrious revolution’.

The way in which households function differs significantly from society to society. Societies may exhibit fundamental differences in the rules and contracts upon which households are based and the way in which power is divided over gender and generational divisions. For example when analysing such differences we could ask ourselves: Is marriage based on consensus or arranged by the family? Do spouses, upon marriage, move in with one of their parents, to form relatively large multi-three generational households, or do they set up their own households? Do marriages entail transfers of capital and goods, and if so, in which direction? How do these differing household models affect possibilities for education and other forms of human capital formation of men and women – and hence, the choice between ‘quantity’ or ‘quality’? Finally, to what extent can the peculiar development of the European marriage pattern help to explain the diverging development of Western Europe after 1800 (the ‘Great Divergence’)?

This theme of marriage patterns, household formation, and economic development is what the 2010 conference in Utrecht wishes to explore. The conference continues the tradition of collaborative conferences, touching upon major themes in global economic history, jointly organised by Utrecht University and the Global Economic History Network (GEHN) of LSE (for a list of previous conferences see <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN/GEHNWorkshops.htm> and <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/conference.php>). We intend to bring together experts in the fields of demography, history, economics, sociology and anthropology in order to address a wide number of issues that deal with household formation, marriage patterns

and economic development, both in terms of geographical scope and historical time span.

In particular the conference aims to address the following three areas:

1. **A general overview of the organization of households in different parts of the world:** What are the basic ‘rules of the game’, and what are their effects on average age of marriage of men and women, age differences between spouses, the share of singles in a society, the remarriage rate of widows, etc.?
2. **The relationship of the rules of the game with economic development as seen from several different angles:** How does the marriage pattern affect the balance of power within the household? How does the arrangement of marriages affect intergenerational transfers? And how does this in turn affect women’s financial positions and their labour participation rate? Do marital traditions affect the chances for men and women to be active on labour markets and engage in training or education, both within and outside the household? How does commercialisation and the development of wage labour affect all this? To what extent do the strength of family ties affect the intensity, type and gender of labour migration? Paper proposals on any other aspect of economic development considered in light of changes in marriage patterns are welcomed.
3. **Theoretical insights:** Lastly, the organizers explicitly welcome papers that offer more theoretical insights into the functional nature of marriage patterns, and their impact on household formation and economic development in the long run.

We plan to run a three-day workshop, like those organized in the past by the GEHN, running from the 7th until the 10th of October 2010.

Participation is by invitation only. If you are interested in participating please send a one page (400 words) abstract of the paper you would like to present before the 1st of February 2010 to the following address: S.G.Carmichael@uu.nl. Transport and accommodation costs of invited participants will be fully covered by the following grants:

- Historical Patterns of Development and Underdevelopment: Origins and Persistence of the Great Divergence (HI-POD)
(<http://www.cepr.org/research/HIPOD.htm>)
- ERC Starting grant “United We Stand. The dynamics and consequences of institutions for collective action in pre-industrial Europe”
(<http://vkc.library.uu.nl/vkc/seh/research/Lists/Projects/DispForm.aspx?ID=19&Source=http://vkc.library.uu.nl/vkc/seh/research/Lists/ResearchDesk/DispForm.aspx?ID=1&Source=http://vkc.library.uu.nl/vkc/seh/research/Pages/Department.aspx>)

Organisers:

Sarah Carmichael, Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden