

3.7. Agrarian reforms or markets – causes of agricultural growth in comparative perspective

Panel organiser: Olsson, Mats, Lund University, Sweden

The agricultural transformation of preindustrial Europe is a classical area of research, which has drawn attention to several important factors affecting growth. The prevailing focus on single areas in European research has led researchers to put forward different aspects as key factors in the agricultural transformation. The literature on Germany and Sweden 1750–1880 indicate that these areas experienced agricultural transformations at about the same point in time, but while institutional change and land reforms have been put forward as explanations for the Swedish development, recent German research has downplayed this part, instead focusing on the long-term process of market integration as the most important factor. The aim of this panel is to study growth, institutional change and market integration during agricultural transformations.

Chair: Pinilla, Vicente, University of Zaragoza, Spain

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3.7.1. Agricultural growth without agrarian reforms? The case of early industrializing Saxony c. 1770-1850

Kopsidis, Michael, Leibniz-Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO), Halle (Saale), Germany

Saxony's population growth accelerated after the Seven Year's War. Simultaneously Saxony's industry boomed. Beside the Northern Rhineland it developed very early into a center of industrialization in Germany. However, in stark contrast to the Northern Rhineland agrarian reforms took place very late only after 1830. Thus, to a large part the structural transformation of Saxony from an agrarian to an industrial economy c. 1800-1830 proceeded under the conditions of the Grundherrschaft (manorial system). Moreover, due to the boosting demand for wool landlords insisted on their common rights of temporarily grazing their sheep on all arable land whereas peasants feverishly tried to intensify farming to benefit from rising food prices. As a consequence of booming sheep stocks severe land use conflicts between peasants and landlords occurred. The paper asks for the consequences of the continuing existence of the manorial system on agricultural growth. Despite a strongly growing pressure on natural resources Saxony could successfully escape the Malthusian trap without radical liberal agrarian reforms. A comparison between Saxonian regions demonstrates that negotiated solutions between the peasants and the landlords according to the Coase-theorem seemed to have played an important role in solving land use conflicts and in enabling agricultural growth. However only good peasant property rights and a central government which strongly supported voluntary partly 'enclosures by will' in favour of the peasants allowed to solve the antagonistic land use conflicts within the institutional setting of the mitteldeutsche Grundherrschaft.

3.7.2. Agrarian reform, markets and agricultural growth in Westphalia, 1820-1870

Fertig, Georg, University of Halle (Saale), Germany

During the 19th century, Westphalia underwent a massive growth in agrarian output, particularly in regions close to industrial centres of demand. In the same period, property rights were disentangled between lords and peasants, and the Prussian state introduced a modern system of documenting property and hypothecs. Also, common lands were divided in some regions during the 19th century. While these reforms might lend support to the institutionalist view that a clearer specification of property rights was the main cause of growth, alternative views emphasizing the role of consumer markets have also been presented. Over the last decade, agricultural product markets, land reforms, land markets, land productivity, life cycle and network strategies in Westphalia have been studied in depth by various authors; Westphalia has thus become a hot spot of European rural history. This paper will give an overview on recent findings and interpret them in the context of the session.

3.7.3. Interaction between institutional change and market forces in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century

Nagy, Mariann, University of Pécs, Hungary

My paper is focusing on the interaction between institutional changes and market forces for pre-1918 Hungarian agricultural growth. The most important institutional changes occurred in 1848 and afterwards when essential political, institutional and juridical changes were carried out. Common market was created by abolishing the customs frontier between Austria and Hungary in 1850. For Hungarian agriculture and the food industry, the western half of the Empire represented a secure, long-term and expanding

market – even during the European agrarian crisis at the end of 19th century. The 1890s saw agricultural interests becoming an increasingly important factor in government economic policy by establishing an independent Ministry of Agriculture. It contributed to the spread of modern production methods – especially among the country's peasant farmers. It was due to market requirements, however, that the mechanization of agriculture was most advanced in the field of threshing. The more than fivefold increase in the cultivated area of fodder crops was indicative of the most important change in the structure of the agricultural sector, namely the increased relative importance of livestock farming as against plant production. From the 1830s onwards, the industrialization of Western and Central Europe gave rise to a rapidly expanding market for Hungarian agricultural and food industry products. In the era of dualism, agricultural production in Hungary exhibited an average growth rate of 2–2.1 percent. The paper concludes that the main factor was the market forces which stood behind agricultural growth in Hungary.

3.7.4. Institutional change, markets and agricultural growth in south Sweden 1750-1850

Olsson, Mats, Lund University, Sweden

Svensson, Patrick, Lund University, Sweden

From the 1780s Scania, the main surplus producing region in Sweden, experienced a rapid growth in grain production. While population growth was high, production grew even faster. This agricultural transformation, reflected by growth in total land productivity and in per capita production from the 1780s to the mid-19th century, has in recent research been attributed to institutional changes taking place within agriculture. Secured property rights and fixed taxes for the peasants, and enclosure reforms leading to individual management of land are examples of this. The effect of the transformation in a national perspective was a change from Sweden as a grain-importing country to a major exporter by the 1850s. While the supply-side approach, above all the enclosures, has been highlighted in recent Swedish research less emphasis has been devoted to the role of markets and consumer demand. One reason for this is the lack of rural-urban dynamics in Sweden due to towns being very small. The impact of the European demand for grain and price incentives from these markets affecting Swedish producers are a potential alternative explanation for the growth in production and productivity. This paper sets out to accomplish two things. First, a thorough and elaborated analysis of recent findings will allow for a more complete picture of the agricultural transformation in Scania. Second, unique micro data on production, labour, property rights, and enclosures will be combined with aggregate data on prices, transports and exports to assess the relative importance of institutions and markets for changes in production and productivity.



Participants

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Georg Fertig holds the chair for economic and social history at the University of Halle (Saale), Germany. He has published on topics including pre-industrial migration, land markets, and demography in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Kopsidis, Michael

Michael Kopsidis obtained his PhD in Economics at the University of Münster in 1994. Since 1995 he is senior researcher at the Leibniz-Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO), Halle (Saale), Germany. He works about agricultural growth and peasants in market integration processes in 19th and 20th centuries Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Nagy, Mariann

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