

The 8th 'New Frontiers in African Economic History' Workshop

Department of Economic History

Lund University

“Inequality and economic development in Africa in historical perspectives”

6-7 December 2013

Call for abstracts

Deadline: 14 June

The relationship between economic development and economic growth is a fundamental question in economic history. A vast body of scholarly work argues that high levels of inequality are detrimental to long-term growth (e.g. Deininger and Olinto 1999; Barro 2000; North, Wallis and Weingast 2009; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). However, as shown in world economic history the causality between economic growth and inequality is far from clear and varies over time (see Kuznets 1955, the Brenner debate 1976). Not only levels, but types of inequality matter. Questions such as who are the property holders, which sectors are they involved in, does the society contain a class of landless etc. are crucial for investigating the causal mechanisms between inequality and economic development. The conventional view in African economic history is that inequality was more widespread in commercial areas and settler colonies. In the latter inequality created growth impeding institutions (e.g. Arrighi 1969, Bowden et al. 2008, Leander and Robinson 2012), while increased inequality in the commercial areas is seen as an outcome of the growth processes (e.g. Hopkins 1973, Mandala 1990). It thus looks as if the relationship between inequality and growth can be both positive and negative depending on the type of economy. We know very little about inequality in non-commercial areas, especially during the pre-colonial and colonial times (van de Walle, N., 2009). The 8th 'Frontiers in African Economic History' workshop aims at increasing our knowledge and understanding of inequality and economic development in Africa – past and present.

Theme 1: Inequality and economic development in Africa

The aim of the session is to fill our gap in knowledge about the origins and evolution of inequality and economic development in Africa. The workshop invites papers that discuss inequality and economic development in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa, from a wide range of perspectives and geographical settings. We especially welcome papers that try to detect the causal mechanisms between inequality and economic development.

Theme 2: PhD-research

The aim of the session is to give an opportunity for PhD-students to discuss their research in progress with scholars with a vast and divergent experience of doing research in African economic history. We invite PhD-students to present their research in progress or their research ideas. We welcome all kinds of papers as long as they deal with African economic history.

Outcomes

In order to document the workshop and contribute to the debate more broadly, we are aiming to compile papers that have a particular focus on the relationship between inequality and growth into an edited volume or a special issue. We have contacted publishers and journals and will update the participants as the work proceeds.

The deadline for abstract submissions is **14 of June 2013**. The abstracts should be submitted to jens.Andersson@ekh.lu.se

Contacts:

Main organiser:

Erik Green, Associate Professor
Department of Economic History
Lund University
erik.green@ekh.lu.se

Assistant:

Jens Andersson, PhD-student
Department of Economic History
Lund University
jens.andersson@ekh.lu.se