



Call for research papers 2021

The knowledge economy. Innovation, productivity and economic growth, 13th to 18th century

The results of this call for research papers will be presented at Prato during the 53rd Study Week (May 9th-12th, 2021)

The *LIII Settimana* invites research papers on how organizational, technological, and scientific innovations spurred productivity gains and economic growth from the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries. Can the paradigms and theories that have emerged to explain how the knowledge economy stimulated the Industrial Revolution be usefully applied to the pre-modern period? To what extent can we identify 'useful knowledge' (Simon Kuznets) as a source of economic growth? What kinds of cultural, economic, and institutional structures provided the most hospitable environment for the application of scientific knowledge to innovations that promoted competition, efficiency, quality, specialization, tools, access to information, and other measures of productivity? The *LIII Settimana* will reflect on these relationships as well as their influence on the recovery capacity of European medieval and early modern societies after demographic, economic, and military crises.

Scholars have pointed to the substantial transformations that occurred in 'useful knowledge' in the late medieval and early modern period, but in assessing the impact of these transformations on economic growth, they have tended to highlight institutional and social contexts more than technological innovations. Assumptions about the slower diffusion of scientific knowledge and ideas in the pre-modern era also need rethinking since the pre-modern era was not a homogenous whole. Could the relatively quick economic recovery after the epidemic crises in the second half of the fourteenth century have been related to the spread of technical and commercial knowledge? Similarly, the relationship between the increasingly intensive commercialization of the sixteenth century and the growing attraction of natural philosophers to the practical difficulties of agriculture and industry needs further investigation. The Knowledge Revolution of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been linked, moreover, to the (Second) Commercial Revolution and framed as a prerequisite to the Industrial Revolution.

These issues are at the centre of the Datini Study Week, which invites scholars to analyze the relationship of the knowledge economy to innovations, productivity, and economic growth in the pre-modern period (13th–18th centuries) by considering the following questions: How was 'useful knowledge' transmitted among individuals, across space, and over generations? How could commercial and industrial productivity be associated with the expansion of such knowledge? When and where was useful knowledge amassed in such a way that a relatively great number of innovations and inventions could touch off revolutionary breakthroughs in particular sectors of the economy? The Study Week will make a decisive contribution to our understanding of the knowledge economy as a fundamental element in the development of technology, industry, and commerce in pre-modern Europe.

Sections:

1) Useful Knowledge' and its Dissemination:

- a) What can be regarded as 'useful knowledge'?
- b) How was 'useful knowledge' generated, learned, and transmitted?
- c) How was the expansion of knowledge linked to productivity?
- d) The (intellectual) 'property rights' of innovators/inventors

2) Innovations in Technology, Production, and Commerce:

- a) Innovations and inventions as basis of revolutionary breakthroughs in particular sectors of the economy
- b) Were there periods when and places where innovation and inventions were more prevalent and especially influenced economic growth?
- c) Small "Industrial Revolutions" in pre-industrial times?
- d) The "Industrial Enlightenment" as the key to the modern economy of Western Europe?

3) Productivity and Economic Growth:

- a) How did innovations influence economic growth?
- b) How did cultural and institutional processes influence labour productivity?
- c) How did knowledge contribute to reducing risks?
- d) Was there a specific Western European "culture of growth"?

Expected results

The selected papers will be presented and discussed at Prato in the course of the Study Week 2021. After the discussion at the Settimana sessions, scholars should complete and revise their texts by 30 June 2021. All contributions received by the Institute will be subject to anonymous adjudication before publication.

Call for papers

Scholars are invited to send their proposal by compiling an abstract that will be reviewed by the Executive Committee.

The paper should represent an original contribution and be either generally comparative or a specific case-study that speaks to the larger questions set out here. Participants who are pursuing a PhD, should have completed it before the start of the conference.

Papers proposed by projects or collaborative groups that link scholars from different countries and institutions will be assessed with particular interest if they offer a comparative analysis in geographical or diachronic terms across two or more related research themes. We will also consider innovative session formats for these type of proposals.

The completed format must be received at the following address by **1 November 2019**:

Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini"

Via Ser Lapo Mazzei 37, I 59100 Prato, ITALY

e-mail: datini@istitutodatini.it

The Executive Committee will only take fully completed formats into consideration and will decide whether they have been accepted at the beginning of 2020, when authors of the selected proposals will be notified. Depending on the Institute's financial resources, at least 25 scholars will be provided with hospitality at Prato for the Study Week. The Council may also invite up to 20 additional scholars to participate in the project without any right to hospitality or reimbursement.

The Fondazione Datini will award for the Prato conference up to 10 Travel Bursaries to cover travel costs for the conference to the maximum of 250 euros per grant for postdoctoral scholars who do not hold a full-time academic position. Applicants must send the travel bursaries form to the Fondazione Datini with their paper by **10 April 2021**. The grant will be paid during the conference on the presentation of travel receipts.

The members of the Executive Committee are: Erik Aerts (Leuven, President), Michael North (Greifswald, Vice-President), Paolo Malanima (Catanzaro, Vice-President), Giampiero Nigro (Florence, Scientific Director), Philippe Bernardi (Paris), Hilario Casado Alonso (Valladolid), Olga Katsiardi-Hering (Athens), Maryanne Kowaleski (New York), Giuseppe Petralia (Pisa), Gaetano Sabatini (Rome Tre).

All submitted contributions must be original and not previously published or translated from previous publications.

The provisional texts of the selected contributions or at least a detailed synthesis must reach the Fondazione Datini (Datini Foundation) by **10 April 2021**. They will be put online (with protected access reserved for the participants of the project and members of the Scientific Committee) on the Institute's web pages before the Study Week in order to allow a deeper discussion of their contents.

Authors who fail to send their provisional texts to the Fondazione that day, can not be included in the final programme. In absence of the author the synthesis will be read during the conference.

At the Settimana participants will offer a summary presentation of their contribution lasting 20 minutes.

The definitive texts of the paper, revised by the authors following the discussion (maximum 60,000 characters) must be sent to the Institute by **30 June 2021**. They will be subject to anonymous adjudication. Texts that pass the assessment stage will be published in a special volume within a year (together with two abstracts, one in the language of the essay and the other in one of the official languages of the Institute: Italian, English, French, Spanish and German). Simultaneous translation from and to Italian and English will be available during the Study Week.

For the purpose of publication, texts will be accepted in Italian, French, English, Spanish and German.