



Italian Association for the History of Economic Thought (AISPE)
XV Conference
Rome, 23-25 November 2017

Call for papers

Towards a Comparative History of Economic Thought

The history of economic thought has been studied so far either as a universal or as a national history: a *universal history* of economic theories – a sort of Olympus that only major and mainly western economists who provided a relevant contribution to the advancement of economic knowledge could access – and a *history of national styles and traditions* written according to particular political and cultural factors.

In a world strictly divided into nations and dominated by the West, it could not have been otherwise. And even in the future, we will probably still need to guard the capital of economic theories accumulated with effort and to preserve the memory of so many diverse national histories.

Nevertheless, over the last decades, much, if not everything has changed. We have suddenly entered into a global and intercultural society where women and men belonging to different languages and cultures meet and clash every day. Culture, as a vision – even an economic vision – of society, has become the most powerful factor of aggregation and fragmentation among human beings, people and nations. In the recent past, it has united the two Germanies previously divided by a Wall of ideology that was not only symbolic, and has freed people of the former Soviet Union from an equally ideological pact. Today culture, even the economic one, is more and more a transnational phenomenon, going beyond borders and hindering or easing commercial exchange, monetary agreements, movements of labour and capital, economic integration processes among near and distant countries.

At the same time, globalization, and more generally, economic, cultural and social integration, are increasingly questioned and spur controversial reactions. Widespread signs pointing at a protectionist revival go hand in hand with political slogans that invoke the defence of national interest, intended as a priority with respect to, and even in opposition to, any process of international cooperation and cultural integration. All these processes ask for a rethinking and a reassessment, open to different approaches and outcomes, of the very idea of globalization and of the existence of a single global economic culture.

The need to know the *other*, the *different-from-ourselves*, has fed a new interest in comparative studies: different economic, political juridical systems are being compared in order to single out features that may favour or, on the contrary, represent an obstacle to peaceful living, among people belonging to different cultures.

The topic of the XV Aispe Conference is: “Towards a Comparative History of Economic Thought”.

The Conference aims mainly at raising a series of correlated questions, which are both historical and methodological. Is it possible, and desirable, to write a comparative history of economic thought? What are the great meta-national histories that we should know and compare? How can we identify them?

If we look at the theoretical side, we inevitably fall back on a universal history, which has already been amply studied. But the history of economic thought, as testified by many

authoritative scholars of national traditions, is much more than a mere history of ideas. It explains how theoretical systems emerge, how they compete in the academic and scientific arena in search of an intellectual supremacy; how they evolve in pervasive economic cultures that eventually influence public opinion and political choices. Following this approach, effectively experimented at the national level, we can identify at least six “great histories” of economic thought: western (European, North and South American), Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Islamic, and (maybe) African,

Let’s think, for example, of Europe as a single unity, as a complex (in Latin *complexus* means “what is kept together”), not only as a sum of 28 or more nation-States. Europe-as-a-whole was the object of studies of authoritative historians: Chabod, Febvre, Halecki, Morin (the theoretician of complex thought, who titled one of his books “Thinking Europe”). Let’s wonder: is it possible to write a history of European economic thought that is not just a sum of national histories or a mere history of European integration? Smith, Ricardo, Keynes did not write anything about the unification of Europe; nevertheless, their ideas played a fundamental role in forging modern Europe. What role did economists’s ideas play in making a certain idea of Europe prevail? How can we explain, historically, the return of economic nationalism in Europe? What unites and what divides the “three Europe(s)” (Eastern, Central and Western)? What has Europe in common with China, or America, or the neighbouring Islamic world? And what divides them?

Other sessions

As usual, suggestions concerning further papers and sessions on different original topics and projects on the history of economic thought are welcome.

AISPE awards

The AISPE steering committee will award a prize of 500 euro to two papers selected among those presented in the Conference: one in the field of “History of economic thought”; another one in the field “Italian economic thought”. Those participants who, at the Conference time, will have not reached the age of forty will be eligible for the prize. The awards will be announced during the Conference Social Dinner.

Official Languages

English and Italian

Schedule

31 May 2017: deadline for submitting abstracts

30 June 2017: notification of acceptance

30 September 2017: deadline for registration

5 November 2017: closing date for submission of AISPE awards papers

23-25 November 2017: conference

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An abstract of max 500 words for a paper and max 1000 words for a session should be submitted to aispe2017@unint.eu no later than 31 May 2017.

For information concerning the conference go to www.aispe.eu