

Call for papers of the first meeting of the Working group 4

The State, government and rural societies : the choices of the State

Le Mans, 29th and 30th September 2006

Organisation: Nadine Vivier (Nadine.Vivier@univ-lemans.fr)

Deadline for submission: 28th February 2006

The first conference of the WG 4 will explore the choices made by the State in its policy towards rural societies

For which reasons did the State try to influence and model **peasants**, and how did it act? Its interventions can be exerted on several levels: the global level of the nation or the level of the individual and the family group. In this first conference, we will only focus on the “macro” level: i.e. the economic and/or social policy concerning the whole of the nation, therefore implying choices in the changes in society.

In a simplifying approach, it may be stated that the State first used to intervene in the life of rural populations on the ground of two essential motivations: first, to maintain the order and second, to recruit men for war, to provide food for cities and to give money to the royal Treasury. The peasants really felt the weight of the State’s rule only for certain periods. The desire to develop the national wealth and the welfare of the population naturally led also the State to intervene, in a lasting way, to support production or to protect an endangered form of activity, or group of people (management of water, prevention of fire). This can be noticed very early on in some countries, later in others. Increasingly, directives took account of the desire to provide consumers with more healthy products, took also account of the moral and physical health and welfare of rural people (standards of construction to avoid fires, hygiene to improve quality of water and to prevent diseases), and tried to preserve the environment (first in preventing gullying). Nevertheless, the trend towards an increasing weight of the State is complex, especially during the 19th and 20th c., when the liberal State hesitated between intervention and non-intervention. It also had in this period to adapt its management to an important shift, from shortage to overproduction.

The Workshop on this issue will be split into two themes (of one day each): the first part will give a general view on the choices of the State, while the second part will study a specific instrument of this policy: men training

1. The decision making process of the State in its intervention towards rural societies

*** Which authorities are in charge of agriculture and other activities?**

When and why occurred the creation of a specific ministry of Agriculture? of Forest ?

What are the decision tools available ? How does the State proceed? By enquiries on the situation in its own country, and/or in the foreign countries? By preliminary tests? by encouragement measures ? What agreement could it find with the private parties? How long does this period of studies or tests last?

***What are the major concerns of the State?** We will distinguish between different types of States’s actions: reaction to immediate problems or fundamental reforms of the economic and social structures.

What kind of tools are employed and how is the decision administratively implemented : through flexible frameworks, incentives or rather through constraining laws approved by the Parliament?

Papers dealing with the evolution in the long term of main concerns of the State are

particularly welcome.

2. Men training : means and results

The State can influence directly on properties and farms structures, and on technical tools. It can also indirectly play a role through men training, by teaching them certain values that will mould them according to the State's choices.

***The means that the State had actually at hands to have his social choices accepted** by the rural population will be explored. What measures have been taken?

The school comes first to mind: primary schools, farming schools for young men and women, the temporary schools, one-off lessons and conferences for adults, and yearly agricultural competitions (like comices).

*** The peasant training policy?** Who were the men having contributed to the spread of those ideas? Was the peasant training policy implemented directly by the State itself, or delegate to private parties? What have been the impact and efficiency? How did the peasants welcome it?

Time and geographical areas

The papers should present studies on a long time period (at least half a century) in order to identify the main characteristics of each country's policy.

No period is excluded as long as it offers interesting comparative views. Medieval states policy might be as pertinent as more recent periods

The aim is to obtain comparative views of different European countries' policies. Therefore, the relevant geographical area is either one country or two countries (presenting directly a comparison).

16 papers are planned, dealing with the maximum number of countries.

Deadlines

Proposals to be sent to the organizers: one page abstract, before **28th February 2006**

Full papers for August 28th 2006, to be posted in the website

Meeting: Friday 29th and Saturday 30th September 2006 in Le Mans (France).

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