

7 February 2024, board room

Demographic Losses in Poland during World War II 1939–1945.

Verification of Mass Sources and the Method of Estimation during Border Changes

Konrad Wnęk (Jagiellonian University)

The paper discusses the applied method of verification of source data collected by local administration units after the end of World War II in Poland in relation to demographic losses during this conflict. The basic research problem was the question of the reliability and completeness of the questionnaires and the tabular summaries compiled on their basis. Such questionnaires, however, are lacking for the areas of Poland that fell within the borders of the USSR after 1945, and therefore cannot be used to investigate population losses in this area. In this case, the results of the 1931 census and a lesser known census conducted by the occupying German authorities on 1 March 1943 were used. The analysis was hampered by border shifts and subsequent changes of occupants, so in this case methods of geostatistical analysis based on a population density grid were used.

14 February 2024, room 5

Technological Unemployment in the British Industrial Revolution:

The Destruction of Hand Spinning

Benjamin Schneider (Oslo Metropolitan University)

This paper analyzes the elimination of hand spinning in Britain during the Industrial Revolution and shows that it was one of the earliest examples of large-scale technological unemployment. First, it uses new empirical evidence and sources to estimate spinning employment before the innovations of the 1760s and 1770s. The estimates show that spinning employed up to 8% of the population by c. 1770. Next, the paper systematically analyzes the course, extent, and locations of technological unemployment produced by mechanization using more than 200 detailed qualitative sources. It first presents an estimate of job loss in hand spinning of cotton by the late 1780s. It then uses evidence from more than 2200 observations by contemporary social commentators, county agricultural surveys, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission's Rural and Town Queries to show the breadth and duration of unemployment produced by mechanization. The destruction of hand spinning began to impact women and households in the 1780s, and the effects persisted until at least the mid-1830s. Finally, it shows that this technological shock likely had an unequal effect on family incomes that resulted from variation in household composition and local labor market conditions. The findings demonstrate that unemployment must be incorporated into analysis of the impacts of industrialization on living standards and highlight the potential long-run costs of job-replacing technology.

6 March 2024, board room

Shareholder Democracy under Autocracy: Voting Rights and Corporate Performance in Imperial Russia

Amanda Gregg (Middlebury College), co-authored with Amy Dayton (Strider Technologies) and Steven Nafziger (Williams College)

This paper investigates how the rules that corporations wrote for themselves related to their financing and performance in an environment characterized by poor investor protections, Imperial Russia. We present new data on detailed governance provisions from Imperial Russian corporate charters, which we connect to a comprehensive panel database of corporate balance sheets from 1899 to 1914. We document how variation in votes per share and other shareholder rights provisions were related to corporate choices of using debt vs. equity and whether these governance provisions correlated systematically with performance measures on the balance sheet and in terms of the market-to-book ratio. This investigation reveals the tradeoffs weighed by Imperial Russian corporations and demonstrates the surprising flexibility that Russian corporations enjoyed, conditional on obtaining a corporate charter.

The seminar meets **Wednesdays at 1:15 pm** in the History Faculty and online on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/96176307098?pwd=aHNIWEZ4SHd1a0MrVkpUQ05aZVFuUT09>

We normally have dinner with the speaker afterwards, to which all are welcome.

Conveners: Aleksandra Dul [✉](#) Leigh Shaw-Taylor [✉](#) Alexis Litvine [✉](#)

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