

Room 313 15:30 - 18:00

"Historical role of Belgium and the Netherlands in European Integration"

Today, Brussels is considered by many as a kind of Capital of Europe and its centrality should be considered in historical context that Belgium and the Netherlands or Low Countries have played in the long process of European Integration. So this symposium focuses the function and structure of metropolitan cities in Low Countries from 14th to 17th century.

PROGRAMME

15:30	Opening address: Prof Takashi Okunishi, Kobe University "Theoretical understanding and Historical reality"
15:40	Keynote lecture: Prof Wim Blockmans, Universiteit Leiden "Metropolitan at the Northern Sea"
16:15	Lecture: Prof Bruno Blonde, Universiteit Antwerpen "The restructuring and diversification at the supply side and changing consumer patterns at the demand side."
16:50	Lecture: Prof Clé Lesger, Universiteit van Amsterdam "From Antwerp to Amsterdam. Differential growth and shifting centres of gravity"
17:25	Lecture: Prof Peter Spufford, University of Cambridge "The role of Belgium and the Netherlands is the development of European Financial Centres"

This symposium was organized by Takashi Okunishi (Professor of Kobe University) in order to make it clear that Belgium and the Netherlands or Low Countries have played as a centre in the long process of European Integration in focusing the function and structure of metropolitan cities in Low Countries from 14th to 17th century.

Firstly, Takashi Okunishi made the opening address; "Theoretical understanding and Historical reality" at 15:30 - 15:40.

He stressed that Brussels role as a kind of Capital of Europe and its centrality should be considered in historical context that Belgium and the Netherlands or Low Countries have played in the long process of European Integration. Some political historian have noticed Belgian role at reconciliation between France and Germany after second world war and they have related it with its location Border between Latin Culture and German Culture, or vestige of Frank kingdom. Role of Commercial and financial centre from late middle ages to early modern times has been noticed in a similar context by economic and social historians. In order to study the emergence, development and shifting of metropolis in Low Countries. We should collaboratively make a theoretical analysis with some key concepts such as Stochastic Fluctuation, Self Organization and Scale-Free Network and a substantive research of its multiple elements or historical reality.

Then, Wim Blockmans (Professor of University of Leiden) made the keynote lecture; "The Dynamics of the Metropolises at the North Sea" at 15:40-16:15.

He explained that the river delta of the Low Countries has been at the heart of the dynamics of the capitalist world-economy since the twelfth century. The locations of the metropolis shifted over time with imitation and innovation. Their capacity of adaptation to sustained growth is at the core of a noticeable continuity; 1. Delta connects buoyant regions, 2. High population density and urbanization, 3. Continuous demand and offer. Regional shifts implied structural adaptations to world-economy and political conditions, 4. Gateways integrate beyond boundaries. This reflects the evolution of the world-economy as a whole. Two lectures on Antwerp and Amsterdam followed Blockmans lecture.

Bruno Blonde (Professor of University of Antwerp) made his lecture; "Antwerp and the Material Renaissance; Reflections on the role of demand patterns and economic changes" at 16:15-16:45

He started a summary of historical study on consumer changes in early modern Europe. Then he described the detail of sixteenth-century Antwerp and the 'material renaissance' and made his conclusions; from the 'material renaissance' to the 'industrious revolution'; 1. Change: Late middle ages and long sixteenth century: Important **qualitative changes**: widespread acceptance of 'populuxe' goods. 2. Continuity: 'Consumer changes' of the 17th and 18th centuries matured in centuries-old process. 3. The material renaissance was marked by a falling income elasticity of 'new luxuries'; relative price changes, product and process innovations; high urban incomes > allocation of household resources. 4. Key role of urban societies and the middling sort of people ever since late middle ages.

Clé Lesger (Professor of University of Amsterdam) made his lecture: "From Antwerp to Amsterdam; Differential growth and

shifting centres of gravity" at 16:45-17:15.

He elaborated on the spatial economy of the Low Countries and the political turmoil during the Revolt. He used them to clarify the shift of the centre of gravity within the Low Countries from Antwerp to Amsterdam in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Then he stressed the importance role of Amsterdam as Centre of information exchange and concluded his lecture with a picture of a Price current which showed that the price currents were long lists of commodities and their prices on the Amsterdam market. He explained that in the first decades of the seventeenth century the price-current gained a more official character, as it bore the coat of arms of the city and an announcement that the prices had been checked by five members of the brokers' guild and this emphasized the objectivity and reliability of the information it contained. The Amsterdam Price current was published every week and it was cheap as well. Nowhere in Europe price currents were published that matched the broad range of commodities and none matched the frequency and the low costs of the Amsterdam price currents. Amsterdam Price currents were also translated into Italian, French (the international language in commerce) and English. Finally, Peter Spufford (Professor of University of Cambridge) made his lecture; "The role of Belgium and the Netherlands is the development of European Financial Centres" at 17:15-17:50.

He summarized the history of shift of financial centre from late middle ages to modern times, then described several important economical social factors of the financial centres that Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam have provided from 15th to 17th century. In this explanation he compared them with those of London in later time. He stressed that London has remained the primary international centre, not only for Europe, but for the world as well, for well over two centuries. How much longer it will remain is problematical, since England has long lost its commercial and industrial importance. London, therefore, like Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam, has remained the financial centre long after losing its trade and industry. What has been remarkable about all these financial centres has been that the people involved have come from many different places. The City of London is today a country of its own within Britain. The same could be said in the past for Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam.

Q&A session was set after lecture session at 17:50- 18:15

