

Climate Change Economics between Europe and China: Long-term Economic Development of Divergence and Convergence

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The economy in early modern China was indeed more advanced than in preindustrial Europe, but China developed a modern economy much later than Europe. Could climate change impacts describe and explain this divergence in a compelling way under the paradigm of environmental humanities, in particular with empirical evidence?

The project will review and compare the economic transformations that resulted from climate change in Europe and China from 1500 to 1900. The great divergence is a fundamental concept that reflects two paths of economic development. Situated for the first time within the environmental humanities, this concept should provide a new perspective on climate change and economy.

To meet the objective, the project will add geographical and historical perspectives to our common understanding of the responses and transformations induced by climate change. Furthermore, this project is highly quantitative, since the main goal is to promote statistical analysis in history and the environmental humanities. Quantitative methods will be applied in the analysis of records on economic performance. Since the development of new concepts requires innovation in ideas and methodologies, quantitative analysis will be combined with qualitative analysis on each detailed record to bridge the methodologies of geography and history.

In addition, the project will claim itself as a macroscale research in time and space. In terms of temporal scale, it will collect as much available data as possible to investigate the long-term interactions between climate change and the economy in the past few hundred years. For the spatial scale, Europe will be treated as a whole. Then, the connections between climate change and economy will be compared between Europe and China on a large geographic scale.