

Workshop in Vienna

Mountain Entrepreneurs – Generations and Transformations (1740–1830)

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14–15 September 2023

This workshop is part of the project “Generaciones inciertas. Las familias de los influyentes españoles en tiempos de transformación (1740–1830) | Uncertain Generations. Influential Spanish Families in Times of Transformation (1740–1830)”.

The project is based on the assumption that exploring the activities, undertakings and ways of life of different generations of influential families can help explain social transformations that took place during the second half of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth centuries. Both the project and workshop aim to bring family and kinship to the fore as historical agents for change – rather than economic developments or governmental measures. In this sense, generation is seen as a key concept that bridges continuity with innovation at the personal and familial levels. Specifically, it is involved in social, economic and political processes and at the same time influences these processes. Thus, our aim is, essentially, to link historical time with family time.

Building upon recent research on historical kinship, we want to examine to what extent changes were influenced by the transition from vertical to horizontal family logics. From this follows the question whether there was indeed a sequence of generations with a generation of founders establishing the family’s wealth, followed by generations of transformation and change.

The central question of the workshop is: how did influential families deal with transformations that took place between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and how did these families organize their social relations? To answer this question, it is necessary to characterise the different generations, work out their specific profiles and decisive factors such as family and power structures, belongings, gender relations, activities, family and kinship organisation, handling of property and wealth, education, training and professionalisation, conflicts and tensions, public presence and appearances, ideas and ideals.

The workshop focuses on mountain societies from the Carpathians to the Alpine area, the Pyrenees, the Cantabrian Mountains and beyond. As the bourgeois intellectual elite increasingly saw the mountains in a new and idealised light, familial and social change takes on another dimension here. These perceptions were often marked by ethnographic views of ‘the other’ oscillating between primitivisation and romanticisation. Economically, however, these regions were in close exchange with the surrounding lowlands – in the Alps, for example, through the enormously important transit trade.

Workshop languages are English, Italian and Spanish (with a PowerPoint presentation in English).

We are seeking funds to reimburse travel and accommodation expenses.

We invite abstracts (approx. 250 words) of the proposed papers and short bios sent to margareth.lanzinger@univie.ac.at by 15 June 2022.