

Call for Papers

Conference on the subject: “Consumption of everyday goods in social spaces in the pre-modern period”

6th annual conference of the Working Group: “Materielle Kultur und Konsum in der Vormoderne”, Vienna 07.07.2022-09.07.2022

It has been exactly forty years since Neil McKendrick proclaimed the ‘Consumer Revolution’ in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. Since then, our knowledge on European consumption in the early modern period has expanded considerably, due to the publication, especially in the last three decades, of a great number of studies on the subject. These studies did not only concern different regions or time periods, but also formulated new approaches, methodological processes and theoretical tools for the investigation of consumption in different societies and made use of a wide variety of source material. Through the influence of the accumulated research on the subject, during the previous decade, social groups, minorities, or even regions in Europe, which remained outside the scope of the initial research, were also investigated. Furthermore, research on consumption has been extended both temporally beyond the early modern period, and thematically concerning the investigation of issues such as living standards, consumption restrictions, gender differences or early modern attitudes towards consumption. Finally, emphasis was also placed on the materiality of consumption.

In this sixth annual conference of the Working Group: “Materielle Kultur und Konsum in der Vormoderne” the focus will be placed on consumption. The goal of the conference is to bring together university scientists, independent researchers and doctoral candidates from various fields, whose research interests concern consumption in Europe between later medieval times and the start of the nineteenth century. Consumption constitutes a basic aspect of many social practices in everyday life and in different social spaces. Therefore, the discussion in the conference will not focus on singular, rare, exotic, valuable objects, rather it will revolve around the acquisition, purchase, application and use of common, everyday objects, or the appropriation and integration of ‘novel’ articles in the consumption of a population. Furthermore, social spaces, for example different social and economic groups, milieus, households, minorities, urban and rural communities will constitute important parameters of the discussion in the conference.

An important goal of the conference is to present a wide range of case studies, which research consumption in diverse social spaces, as well as essays, which focus on different theoretical-methodological approaches to the investigation of the subject, either through application of new theoretical tools in a specific study, interdisciplinarity, innovative use of source material, combination of a variety of sources, use of previously seldom used types of sources or creative spatial or temporal comparisons. Papers can engage with themes and questions concerning consumption of everyday goods, for example:

- What were the roles of different household members in consuming goods and preparing or procuring goods (parents, children, elderly, servants, kin) and how did different types of households relate to the market?
- What are the methodological and empirical challenges in incorporating case studies into broader narratives on consumption in the period, such as the ‘industrious revolution’?
- Can we say more about rural consumption practices and how they compared and interconnected with urban consumption practices quantitatively or qualitatively?
- What was the impact of different legal contexts and how did they shape consumption patterns, choices, opportunities, or constraints? This could relate for example to inheritance and marital property law or sumptuary legislation.
- How can we fill the missing links to identify or reconstruct everyday consumption patterns of the lower social strata? This could address the question of sources, bias, missing data, the debate on standard of living, or the capacity to consume and be actors in the consumption process.
- How can we best apply document linkage? The wealth of sources and possible approaches: inventories, provision contracts, widowhood contracts, account books, parish records, literary sources, periodic press or even objects.
- Who were the collective and individual actors and how can we determine consumer agency in matters of fashion, novelty and taste?
- How did the material properties of objects influence consumption and social practices in general?

Please send your Abstracts (Max. 1.500 characters including spaces) in German or English and a short CV to aris.kafantogias@univie.ac.at **and** to christina.janine.maegraith@univie.ac.at until January tenth, 2022 (10.01.2022). The Abstract should describe the topic of the presentation and shortly mention the theoretical and methodological approach, as well as the primary source material

of the research. The conference will try to cover at least part of the expenses of the presenters. Priority of reimbursement will be given to doctoral candidates or independent researchers with no university affiliation. The language of the conference will be German and English.