

Karine Van Der Beek

8 November 2018, 11:15-12:30, bld. 72, room 465

Wheels of Change:

The geographical origins of mechanization & industrialization

in 18th century England

This paper uses an extensive cross-section of England's historical and geographical characteristics, to examine the geographical origins of mechanization & industrialization in eighteenth century England. We show that the location of English textile centers practically persisted in the same regions (i.e. the Cotswolds, East Anglia, the middle Pennines in Lancashire, and the West-Riding) since the fourteenth century, in locations that had mechanical grinding mills in earlier periods. Our hypothesis is that the regions' resources determine its relative advantage. In the case of the textile sector, regions that had both the proximity of rivers and a potential for high wheat yields had more watermills and mechanical workers who were required in order to construct and maintain them. *Ceteris paribus*, when textile fulling mills were introduced in the fourteenth century, they were more likely to be adopted in textile centers located in places with an existing relative advantage in watermill technology. To identify the effect of the existence of mechanical workers on the extent of textile productions we use the location of grinding mills in the 11th century (from Domesday Book) as an IV for mechanical workers during the first half of the 18th century and find a significant and positive effect. Our findings imply that the availability of coal and specialization in cotton textiles rather than woolens, are not a sufficient explanation for the industrialization that took place in the end of the eighteenth century.