

ESF Exploratory Workshop on
**THE HISTORICAL FORMATION OF
EUROPEAN DRINKING CULTURES:
Regions, Methods, Sources**

Venice (Italy), 9-12 September 2010

Convened by:

**Dr Beat Kümin (Warwick/U.K.),
Dr Angela McShane (London/U.K.) and
Dr Phil Withington (Cambridge/U.K.)**

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

1. Executive summary

Format and atmosphere

The exploratory workshop 'The Historical Formation of European Drinking Cultures' was held in Venice/IT, at the Palazzo Pesaro Papafava (the study and research centre of the University of Warwick in the city), over 3 days from 9 to 12 September 2010. Including the ESF's rapporteur, a total of 18 scholars from 9 countries (with an even wider geographical spread of research interests) attended the gathering. There was a very constructive balance of expertise, experience and career stages. In line with the ESF guidelines, the organizers provided plenty of opportunities for formal discussions, but the congenial environment of a spacious palazzo with a private garden (and the policy to take all meals collectively) allowed plenty of additional informal interaction. The 'early modern' atmosphere of Venice and the distance from regular work commitments created an ideal framework for wide-ranging and stimulating exchange throughout the three days. The success of the venture is reflected in the fact that all workshop participants expressed a willingness to get involved in future collaborations and that the keynote speakers/session chairs (ranging from senior academics to leaders of cultural institutions) are prepared to play an advisory role in any future projects.



Workshop participants during a session break. From left to right: Alexandra Walsham, Beat Kümin, Petter Aaslestad, Karin Sennefelt, Helena Koenigsmarková, James Brown, Susanne Rau. Photo: Angela McShane.

Objectives

This ESF workshop set out to explore key research issues relating to the historical formation of European drinking cultures in the period c. 1400-1800. Drawing on a wide range of regional contexts and scholarly approaches, it aimed to achieve two objectives:

first, to establish a theoretical and methodological framework for the comparative study of drinking cultures;

second, to identify bodies of source material that can sustain interdisciplinary analysis. The event was explicitly conceived to lay the foundations for a large-scale research initiative on long-term developments in this area of current public concern.

Programme

All participants arrived in Venice during the afternoon of Thursday 9 September 2010. Four sessions (consisting of keynotes, case studies, comment and open discussion) were held on Friday and Saturday 10-11 September. The concluding general discussion, focused on viable follow-on initiatives, was held on Sunday morning 12 September 2010.

Overall conclusions

The meeting demonstrated the crucial significance of drinking studies in the cultural history of pre-modern Europe and the complexity of the subject matter in terms of methodological approaches and regional variations. Some areas of the Continent (England, Germany, France) have received quite extensive attention in recent decades, others (esp. the Mediterranean region and Scandinavia) considerably less. Methodological tools ranged from quantitative analysis via cultural studies approaches to ethnographic description. Following extensive discussions on the best way forward, participants agreed that an academic network in which newly commissioned regional research projects were brought into regular dialogue with each other would be the most effective way to structure future research. It was also felt that this original area of research lent itself to collaboration with museums and art galleries and a sustained programme of knowledge transfer to the wider public. The topic of the workshop, furthermore, is of immediate relevance to current social and political debates in many European countries.

2. Scientific content of the event

Presentations

The workshop consisted of 13 papers in four sessions and a presentation by the ESF rapporteur. Each of the four sessions was introduced by a speculative overview (called 'keynote') from a leading figure in the field, followed by 2-3 close studies dedicated to the peculiarities of specific sources, methods and/or regions and concluded with an in-depth discussion of the session programme informed by a comment from a senior scholar. The common objectives were threefold:

1. to explore the possibility of comparing the formation and development of European drinking cultures;
2. to discuss and formulate theoretical and methodological frameworks for comparative research;
3. to identify the broadest possible range of source materials that can be subjected to systematic interdisciplinary analysis.

The principal themes, arguments and issues, arranged by session, can be summarized as follows:

Introduction

The three co-organizers (Beat KÜMIN, Warwick/UK; Angela McSHANE, London/UK and Phil WITHINGTON, Cambridge/UK) welcomed the participants, reviewed the most recent developments in the field of historical drinking cultures and sketched the main objectives of the workshop.

Petter AASLESTAD (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities; Trondheim/Norway) then gave a powerpoint presentation on the structure, activities and priorities of the ESF.

Session 1: Socio-Political Frameworks and Regulative Structures

In his keynote address, Maarten PRAK (Utrecht/Netherlands) emphasized the need to relate drinking-related issues to the 'big picture' of socio-political and cultural transformations in pre-modern Europe. He paid particular attention to the identification of possible causes of change, reviewing existing explanatory models and theories such as the civilizing process.

James BROWN (Oxford/United Kingdom) took a fresh look at urban recognizances and related records on alehouse keepers in early modern England. He proposed a new approach focusing less on the content and more on the compilation process and social use of these sources. This would allow closer linkage of licensing records with broader research questions on early modern tools of identification and negotiations of power between centre and periphery.

Markku PELTONEN (Helsinki/Finland) made a powerful plea for the importance of spirits as a key component in Scandinavian drinking culture. He traced their social meaning, economic

impact and consumption patterns in diverse source materials including (the methodically challenging field of) folklore.

The DISCUSSION of session 1 themes – proceeding from the extensive commentary by Peter CLARK (Helsinki/Finland), which stressed the key role of regulation, fiscal policy, interest groups and the present-day relevance of early modern transformations – centred above all on the relative priorities of focused pre-modern historical research and the need for engagement with current debates.

Session 2: Environmental and Material Cultures

The keynote presentation of Wolfgang BEHRINGER (Saarbrücken/Germany) highlighted the often neglected contribution of communication infrastructure (facilitating trade), environmental factors (influencing the choice of drink and consumption patterns) and climate change (such as the ‘Little Ice Age’ which started in the late sixteenth century). He encouraged historians to take a more proactive part in shaping contemporary debates about drinking issues.

Angela McSHANE (London/United Kingdom) made a persuasive appeal to fully exploit the contribution of material culture to the study of drinking cultures, taking as an example seventeenth-century drinking vessels made of glass and pewter through investigating their haptic and material qualities as vehicles for understanding practices of sociability and regional identity otherwise hidden in the written record. This vast material archive not only opens enormous potential for cross-European research but, allocated as they are within museums and galleries, extensive outreach and impact opportunities (enabling knowledge transfer across cultural institutions and regional areas).

Fabrice PERRON (Reims/France) drew on the substantial archives of champagne traders (which include financial accounts, distribution records as well as personal correspondence), to explore the production, quality features, marketing devices and taste-related distribution of beverages of sparkling wines in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the DISCUSSION of session 2 themes, following introductory remarks by Helena KOENIGSMARKOVA (Prague/ Czech Republic) and an exploration of the various strengths of different museum collections across the main European drinking regions, individual contributions ranged from the issue of product innovation to the appropriate methodology of measuring climate change.

Session 3: Sociability and Consumption

Keynote speaker Phil WITHINGTON (Cambridge/United Kingdom) suggested a theoretical framework for developing a comparative research programme of drinking and sociability across Europe. The framework was outlined in relation to studies of familial organization and specified a range of factors which could be used to map the formation of drinking cultures. These included the ostensible purpose and inadvertent functions of particular companies; the kind of powers and social credit they claimed; their sociology, hierarchies, and boundaries;

their material cultures and rituals, rules and conventions; and their relation to regulative bodies.

Beat KÜMIN (Warwick/United Kingdom) used the unusually large private archive of a Bavarian innkeeping dynasty (covering the period from the late sixteenth century to the present day) to identify three possible areas of further research relating to drinking houses, namely the (extended) households of publicans, the surprisingly prominent role of women in the world of the tavern and political dimensions of early modern sociability. Underused records for such topics include regional registers of public houses, the archives of fiscal authorities and incidental evidence from different visual genres.

Karin SENNEFELT (Uppsala/Sweden) problematized the common distinction between public and private drinking on the basis of Swedish evidence (which included documentary, visual and material sources). With particular reference to the consumption of *aqua vitae*, she devised a helpful typology which differentiates the three situational contexts of solitude, intimacy and company.

The DISCUSSION of session 3 themes – preceded by introductory remarks from Susanne RAU (Erfurt/Germany) focusing on methodical problems associated with a broader range of cultural sources – addressed the distribution of aquavit, the common features of European drinking cultures (esp. in contrast to the civilization of Islam) and the relationship of drink to fundamental concepts such as *liberté*, discipline and sobriety.

Session 4: Discourses and Representations

In his keynote address, Allen GRIECO (Florence/Italy) investigated contemporary classifications of wine and taste through an analysis of medical and humoral treatises written in the Renaissance. He addressed the relationship between visceral experiences of wine-drinking and semantic expressions in different regions of Europe. The paper highlighted culturally specific notions of fundamental aspects such as quality, appearance and taste.

Katja LINDENAU (Dresden/Germany) drew on an extensive brewing register and associated written sources from the Upper Lusatian town of Görlitz. She introduced participants to the peculiar legal and socio-economic profile of this case study, where specific landed properties held brewing rights (exercised in a customary rotation system) and where possession of the respective privileges was a prerequisite for access to the urban elite.

Jaap VAN DER STEL (Leiden/Netherlands) based his paper on doctoral research and subsequent experiences as a social worker specializing in people directly affected by alcohol abuse. Focusing on the Netherlands, he perceived clear long-term developments and highlighted moral regimes that emerged separately from governmental campaigns in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Tanya CASSIDY (Maynooth/Ireland) investigated the formation, specific context and ensuing appropriation of key elements in Irish drinking culture. A juxtaposition with historical records like travel reports revealed interesting discrepancies and raised questions about the construction and function of cultural stereotypes.

The DISCUSSION of session 4 themes was introduced by a comment by Alexandra WALSHAM (Cambridge/UK), which raised the question of religious sources, dimensions and approaches that might offer further insights into the formation of drinking cultures. This led to lively exchanges on the effectiveness of moral programmes and discourses, the value of linear models of diachronic change and the relationship between secondary and primary sources of information. Further questions addressed the possibility and problematics of using sources from one period for information on (less well-documented) others. This session triggered the most extensive reflection on the relative contributions of different academic disciplines.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome

Indicating what was learned and the new research objectives identified as a result of the workshop is an important part of this section. However we would also like to see in this section which concrete actions (if any) you plan as a follow up - this can be for instance the intention to submit a proposal for a ESF Research Networking Programme or an action under the Framework Programme; or else to set up an informal network, to publish proceedings, or to start a web forum...

The GENERAL DISCUSSION on Sunday morning reviewed the insights and issues which emerged from the four sessions. In her introductory overview of topics, regions and methods, McSHANE set out the potential chronologies, methodologies, concepts and contexts, proposing beverage regions as units of organization and thematic strands including types of intoxicants, production, spaces of consumption, sociability types, habitus and agents. This triggered a very lively debate on the most practicable way to engage with this potentially vast research agenda.

All participants emphasized the significance of the field, the manifold topics to be addressed and the helpful groundwork laid by this workshop. As envisaged by the ESF scheme, the bringing together of scholars of so many different backgrounds, cultural and scientific institutions provided a unique opportunity to enter into a sustained dialogue on a highly topical issue of significance right across the Continent (and indeed beyond).

The following thematic clusters, focused very closely on the workshop's main objectives, were particularly prominent in the participants' responses:

Follow-on initiatives: it was agreed that the workshop co-organizers are in an ideal position to propose a large collaborative research project to a European or UK funding body. There was some discussion about the best possible scheme, as there does not seem to be a call for a suitable ESF or other European scheme at the moment.

Project design: here, the consensus reached involved reducing the potential scope of future initiatives to a manageable comparison of well-chosen regional case studies. One key question concerned the ideal relationship between individual projects and collective endeavours.

In terms of *thematic priorities*, there were diverging views on the most imminent research priorities, with preferences ranging from investigations into policy decisions, economic implications, agents of change and material dimensions / literary approaches addressing wider cultural questions.

Methodologically, debates focused on the most congenial approaches to European similarities, regional peculiarities and diachronic developments on the one hand, and the relationship between case studies, thematic projects and conceptual models on the other.

Source materials: the workshop highlighted numerous new approaches to the wide variety of available source materials and there was widespread agreement on the need for an integrated approach to this wealth of information.

Contemporary relevance: there was no clear consensus on how closely further projects needed to be focused on present-day debates and concerns to achieve the most significant fresh insights and the strongest possible impact.

4. Final programme

Friday 10 September 2010

- 09.00 Introduction and welcome by the co-convenors
Beat Kümin (Department of History, University of Warwick, UK);
Angela McShane (Research Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK) and
Phil Withington (Christ's College, Cambridge, UK)
- 09.15 Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)
Petter Aaslestad (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities - SCH)
- 09.30 Session 1: Socio-political frameworks and regulative structures
Keynote: Maarten Prak (Dept of Social and Economic History, Utrecht University, NL)
Case studies and source materials:
James Brown (Faculty of History, University of Oxford, UK)
Markku Peltonen (Department of History, University of Helsinki, FI)
Round Table I – Chair: Peter Clark (Department of History, University of Helsinki, FI)
- 14.30 Session 2: Environmental and Material cultures
Keynote: Wolfgang Behringer (Historisches Seminar, Universität des Saarlandes, DE)
Case studies and source materials:
Angela McShane (Research Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK)
Fabrice Perron (Centre d'études en Histoire Culturelle, Université de Reims, FR)
Round Table II – Chair: Helena Koenigsmarková (Museum of Decorative Arts in
Prague, CZ)

Saturday 11 September 2010:

- 09.30 Session 3: Sociability and Consumption
Keynote: Phil Withington (Christ's College, Cambridge, UK)
Case studies and source materials:
Beat Kümin (Department of History, University of Warwick, UK)
Karin Sennefelt (Department of History, University of Uppsala, SE)
Round Table III – Chair: Susanne Rau (Historisches Institut, Universität Erfurt, DE)
- 14.30 Session 4: Discourses and Representations
Keynote: Allen Grieco (Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance
Studies, IT)
Case studies and source materials:
Katja Lindenau (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, DE)
Jaap van der Stel (Hogeschool Leiden, NL)
Tanya Cassidy (Department of Anthropology, National University of Ireland, IE)
Round Table IV – Chair: Alexandra Walsham (Trinity College, Cambridge, UK)

Sunday 12 September 2010:

- 09.30 General discussion: Conclusions on the feasibility of a long-term comparative study of
European Drinking Cultures and future plans – Chairs:
Beat Kümin (Department of History, University of Warwick, UK);
Angela McShane (Research Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK) and
Phil Withington (Christ's College, Cambridge, UK)
- c. 13.00 End of workshop

5. Final list of participants

ESF rapporteur

Petter Aaslestad (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities; University of Trondheim/NO)

Workshop participants

Wolfgang Behringer (Historisches Seminar, Universität des Saarlandes, DE)

James Brown (Faculty of History, University of Oxford, UK)

Tanya Cassidy (Department of Anthropology, National University of Ireland, IE)

Peter Clark (Department of History, University of Helsinki, FI)

Allen Grieco (Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, IT)

Helena Koenigsmarková (Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, CZ)

Beat Kümin (Department of History, University of Warwick, UK)

Katja Lindenau (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, DE)

Angela McShane (Research Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK)

Markku Peltonen (Department of History, University of Helsinki, FI)

Fabrice Perron (Centre d'études en Histoire Culturelle, Université de Reims, FR)

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Susanne Rau (Historisches Institut, Universität Erfurt, DE)

Karin Sennfeldt (Department of History, University of Uppsala, SE)

Jaap van der Stel (Hogeschool Leiden, NL)

Alexandra Walsham (Trinity College, Cambridge, UK)

Phil Withington (Christ's College, Cambridge, UK)

6. Statistical information on participants

Seniority

Established scholars: 12

Emerging researchers: 6

Countries of Origin

Czech Republic	1
Finland	2
France	1
Germany	3
Ireland	1
Italy	1
Netherlands	2
Norway	1
Sweden	1
UK	5

Sex

Female: 7

Male: 11