
CALL FOR PAPERS - Deadline: 30 November 2009

CORNUCOPIA QUANTIFIED: NEW GOODS AND IMPROVEMENTS IN LIVING STANDARDS

May 21-22, 2010

CREI, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Catalunya

The conference will explore the impact that new goods have had on the standard of living. Almost all the goods we see around ourselves have only been available for a century or two at most. New goods such as painkillers, penicillin, computers and mobile phones contribute substantially to our well-being. Yet traditional measures of living standards have struggled to capture the benefits of new goods. Typically, we simply divide nominal income by the price of an unchanging basket of goods to determine how 'real incomes' have changed. A number of new approaches have been proposed in recent years, and the value of goods and services from Apple-Cinnamon Cheerios to mobile phones, PCs, and the internet has been reassessed.

With support from the Centre de Recerca en Economia Internacional (CREI) at UPF, Barcelona, and the CEPR's Economic History Initiative, the conference aims to take stock of what has been learned in both methodological and substantive terms. It will bring together leading practitioners to review where the main challenges lie, and what are the implications of findings so far. Scholars interested in these topics include those with backgrounds in microeconomic theory, applied economics, and economic history working on the economics of new goods. The meeting will take place over two days, and will combine a small set of papers with a roundtable discussion by leading scholars on the economics of new goods. Some of the possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- What are the biases in existing measures of the welfare impact of new goods?
- What do we really know about the value of variety for consumers?
- How representative for the economic impact of new goods are existing historical case studies (lighting, cell phones, railways)?

- What contributes more to higher living standards – new goods, or quality change of existing products?
- What are the main determinants of which goods eventually come to contribute substantially to our well-being?

The workshop will take place on May 21-22, 2010, at CREI-UPF, Barcelona, and will be organised by Robert J. Gordon (Northwestern, NBER, and CEPR), and Hans-Joachim Voth (UPF-CREI, ICREA, and CEPR). Travel and accommodation expenses will be covered for all participants according to standard CEPR travel guidelines. If you can use research funds to pay for your own costs, this would free up funding for someone else.

Scholars interested in participating should apply by sending either a full-length paper, or a detailed proposal (abstract plus a three page outline) to Joachim Voth at jvoth@crei.cat. The deadline for replies is **November 30st, 2009**. Acceptance criteria will be based both on the quality of the proposal and the potential novelty and importance of the findings.