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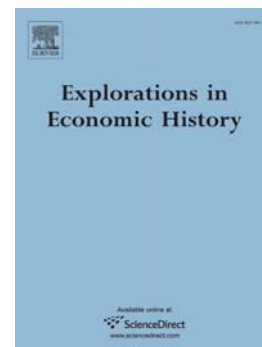
Growing apart in early modern Europe? A comparison of inequality trends in Italy and the Low Countries, 1500–1800

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**Growing apart in early modern Europe? A comparison of inequality
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in Italy and the Low Countries, 1500-1800.**

Abstract

This article provides a comparison of long-term changes in inequality in two key areas of preindustrial Europe: Central-Northern Italy and the Low Countries. Based on new archival material, we reconstruct regional estimates of economic inequality during 1500-1800 and use them to assess the role of economic growth, social-demographic variables, proletarianization, and institutions. We argue that different explanations should be invoked to understand the early modern growth of inequality throughout Europe since several factors conspired to make for a society in which it was much easier for inequality to rise than to fall. Although long-term trends in economic inequality were apparently similar across the continent, divergence occurred in terms of inequality extraction ratios.

Keywords

Economic inequality; early modern period; Sabaudian State; Florentine State; Italy; Low Countries; Belgium; The Netherlands; inequality extraction; wealth concentration; fiscal state; proletarianization

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